

"Hits the ground running and doesn't let up." The Hollywood Reporter

BATMAN DETECTIVE COMICS™

MYTHOLOGY



PETER J. TOMASI • DOUG MAHNKE







BATMAN DETECTIVE COMICS

**VOL. 1:
MYTHOLOGY**

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BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE WITH BILL FINGER





DM
MENDOZA
DE

A FAMILY KNOWN
FOR ITS LEGACY
OF GIVING...



A CITY TEETERING ON
THE EDGE OF CHAOS,
KNOWN FOR TAKING...



THIRTY CENTS WORTH
OF LEAD STEALING
INNOCENTS' LIVES...



THE SOUL OF A YOUNG
BOY IS LEFT WITH A
GAPING HOLE...



A BEATEN AND BLOODED
YOUNG MAN IS SAVED BY
A VOW AND A BELL...



A LIGHTED SYMBOL BURNS.

A DARK KNIGHT
HEEDS THE CALL.



STORY AND WORDS **PETER J. TOMASI**
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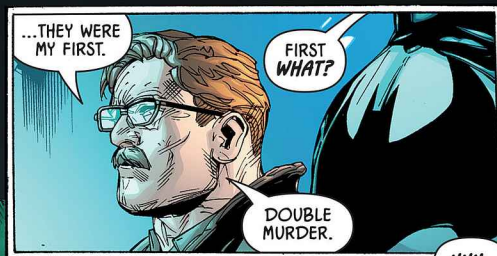
T · H · O · L · O · F · Y





THE WAYNES...

Gotham City Aquarium



...THEY WERE MY FIRST.

FIRST WHAT?

DOUBLE MURDER.

HHN.



"MINE, TOO," I WANT TO SCREAM OUT...

...BUT INSTEAD I BITE DOWN SO HARD I FEEL LIKE MY JAW'S GOING TO SNAP.



THERE THEY ARE.

STARING BACK AT ME THROUGH THE YEARS.

AS OLD AS I AM NOW-- MY MOTHER--MY FATHER-- THEIR WHOLE LIVES AHEAD OF THEM...

...EXCEPT FOR ONE GLARING, IRREFUTABLE FACT.

THESE PEOPLE ARE OBVIOUSLY NOT MY PARENTS.

THEY'VE BEEN MADE TO LOOK EXACTLY LIKE THEM ON THIS DARK DAY.



I'LL HAVE 'EM OUT IN A FEW, COMMISH.

SOONER THAN LATER, PLEASE.

WHO CALLED IT IN?

AQUARIUM EMPLOYEE WHO FEEDS THE DOLPHINS.



WHAT'S THAT?

A TIME SAVER...

KLIK



...FOR IMPATIENT PEOPLE.

BE DEEP

A FEW STEPS BACK WOULD BE PRUDENT.

YEAH...



...THAT'S WHAT I FIGURED.



FER
GOD'S
SAKE...



...THESE
POOR FOLKS ARE
SPITTIN' IMAGES
OF THE WAYNES.

YES...

...YES,
THEY ARE.



AND IF MY PATROLMAN MEMORY
SERVES ME RIGHT, THEY'RE WEARING
THE SAME **CLOTHES** THEY WORE
THE NIGHT OF THE--

EXACT BRANDS,
NAIL POLISH, SHOES,
SOCKS, FUR, WATCHES...
PEARLS...



...EVEN REPLICAS OF
THEIR **WEDDING
RINGS**.

I'VE GOT
DETECTIVE CORRIGAN
SCANNING THE
AQUARIUM'S SECURITY
TAPES FOR ANY
SIGN OF--

I'M SURE
HE WON'T FIND
ANYTHING.

MATTER OF
FACT, I BET
THEY'VE BEEN
**ERASED OR
TAKEN.**

WHOEVER KILLED THESE INNOCENT PEOPLE MADE SURE THEY HAD THE SAME FOUNDATIONAL BONE STRUCTURE AND ETHNICITY AS MY... MARTHA AND THOMAS WAYNE...

...THE PLASTIC SURGERY'S BEYOND REPROACH...

...AS ARE THEIR MORTAL WOUNDS.



BY THE LOOKS OF IT, THE BULLET HOLES DON'T EVEN DEVIATE A CENTIMETER FROM THE ORIGINAL ENTRY POINTS.

A KILLER WHO'S A STICKLER FOR DETAILS, GREAT.

TANK'S EMPTY. CLEAN AS A WHISTLE. NO SIGN OF ANY OTHER FOREIGN MATTER.



DIDN'T EXPECT THERE TO...

HMM?

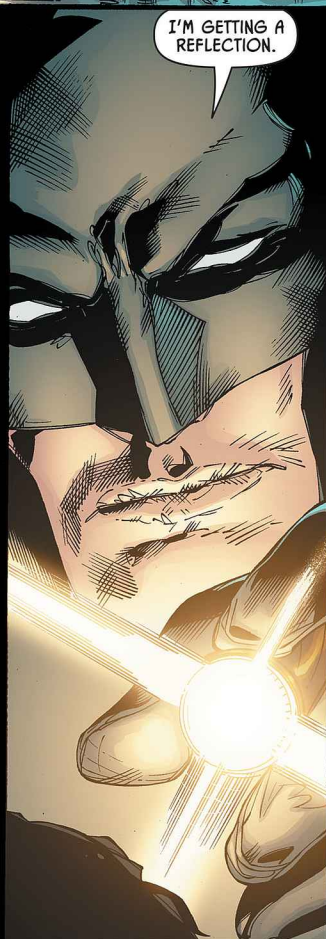
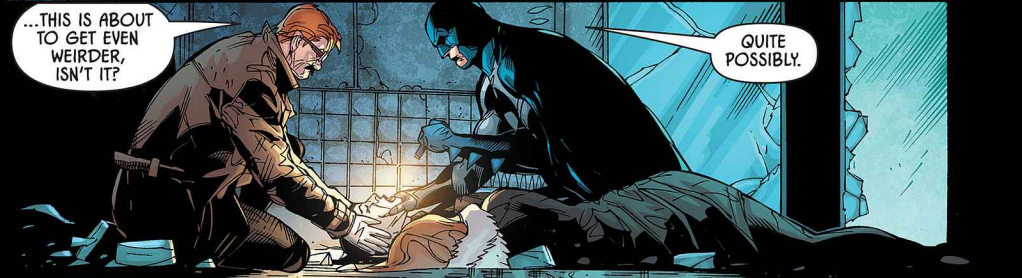
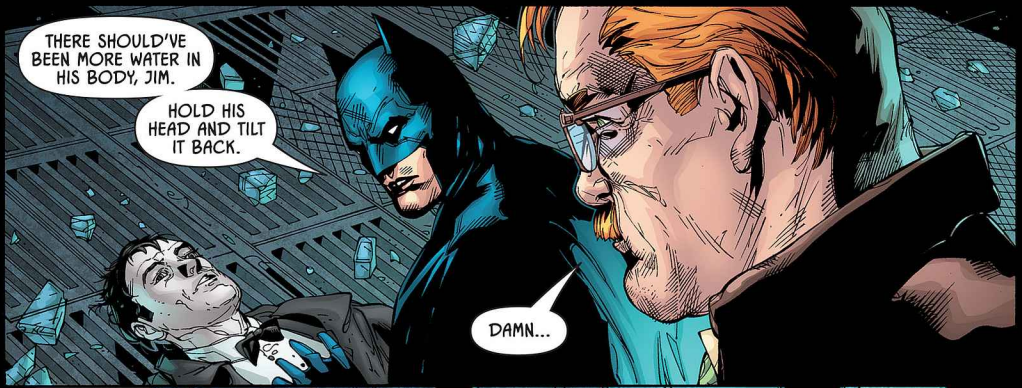


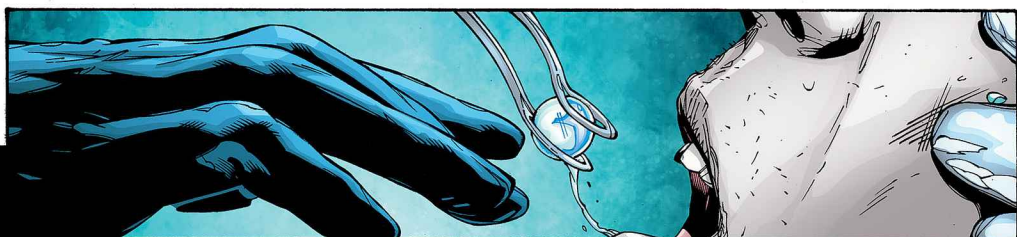
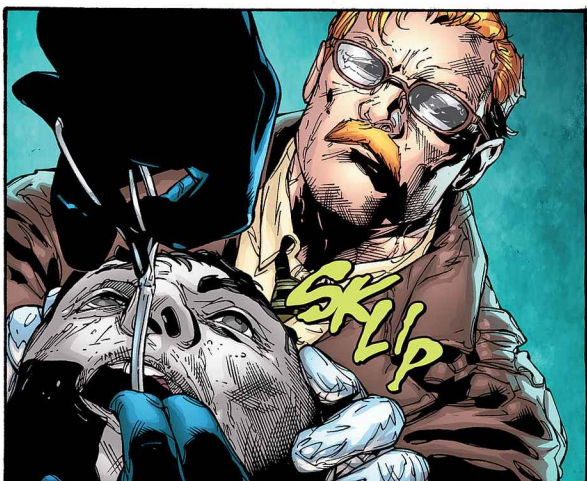
THE WHITES OF THIS VICTIM'S EYES ARE NORMAL.

NO EVIDENCE OF BROKEN BLOOD CAPILLARIES FROM THE STRAIN OF DROWNING.









A PEARL.

BELONGING TO
THE STRING ON...THIS
MARTHA WAYNE'S TORN
NECKLACE.

I'M SURE THERE'S
ONE IN *HER* MOUTH,
TOO.

SO THE
WATER AND
THE PEARL
DIDN'T DO
THEM IN.

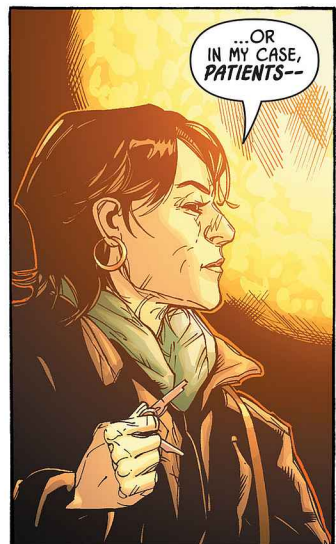
NO. BOTH
WERE ADMINISTERED
POSTMORTEM.

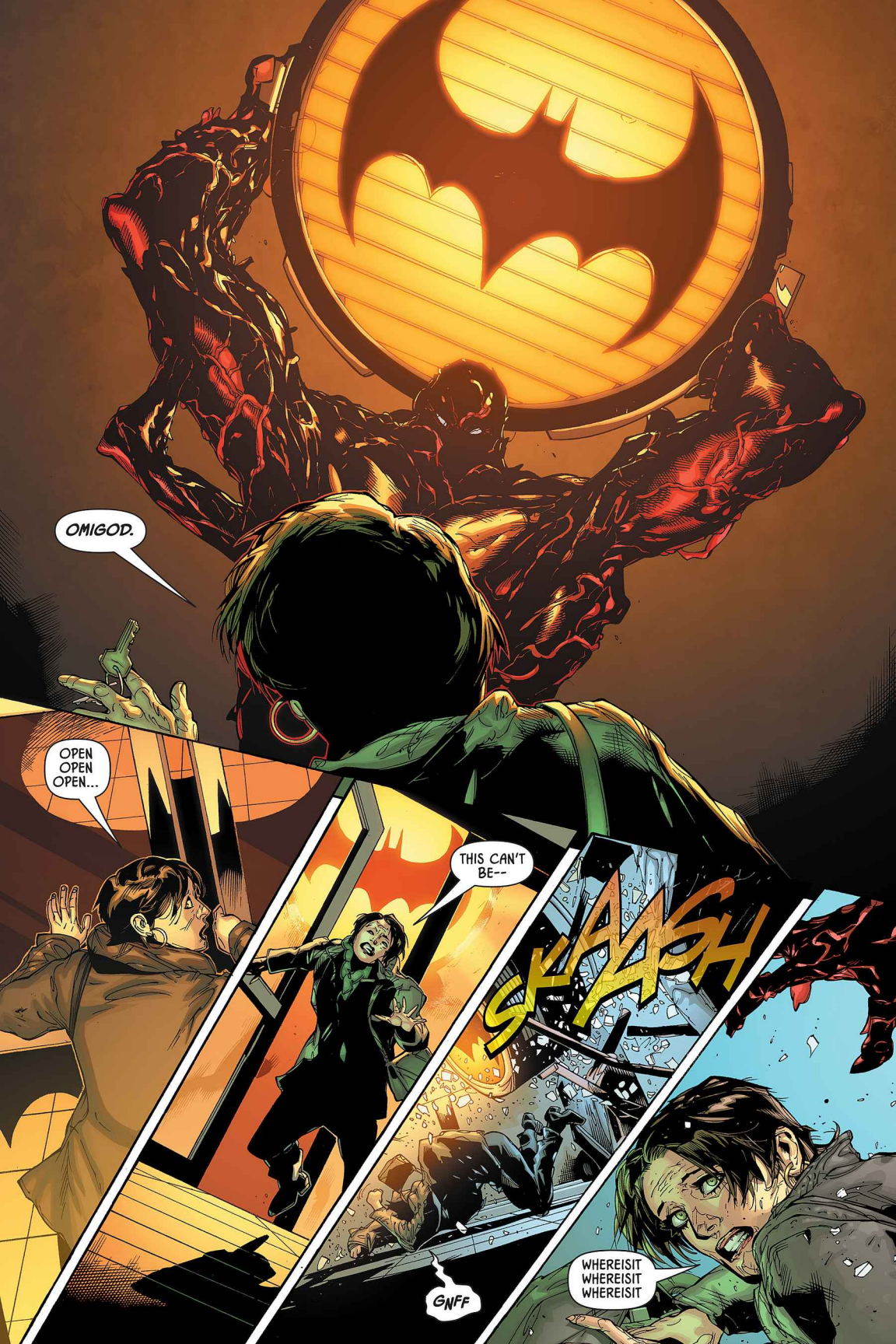
THIS COUPLE WAS
MURDERED *ELSEWHERE*,
COMMISSIONER...

WHY MADE UP
TO LOOK LIKE THE
WAYNES...

...WHY
TODAY?

BECAUSE IT'S THE
ANNIVERSARY
OF THEIR DEATH
OUTSIDE THE
MONARCH
THEATER.





OMIGOD.

OPEN
OPEN
OPEN...

THIS CAN'T
BE--

SKAASH

GNFF

WHEREISIT
WHEREISIT
WHEREISIT



STEP AWAY FROM
THE WOMAN AND RAISE
YOUR HANDS!

RIGHT NOW
OR WE'LL OPEN
FIRE!



BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

WRONG
CHOICE,
CREEP!



BATMAN--I NEED
YOU--THIS IS LESLIE
ON THE COMM-LINK
YOU GAVE ME--

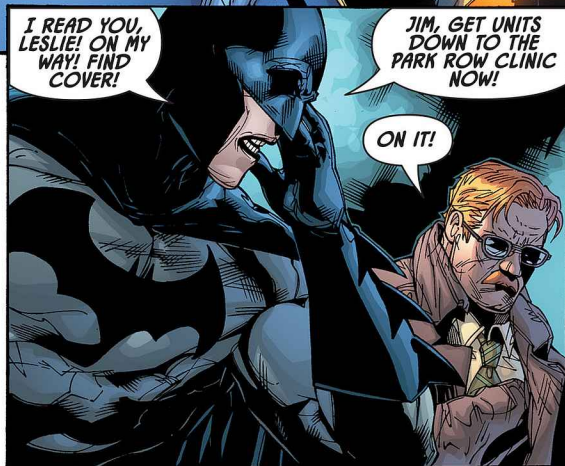
--I'M BEING
ATTACKED--
CAN YOU HEAR
ME?!



SKOOOM

LOOK
OUT!

RUN!



I READ YOU,
LESLIE! ON MY
WAY! FIND
COVER!

JIM, GET UNITS
DOWN TO THE
PARK ROW CLINIC
NOW!

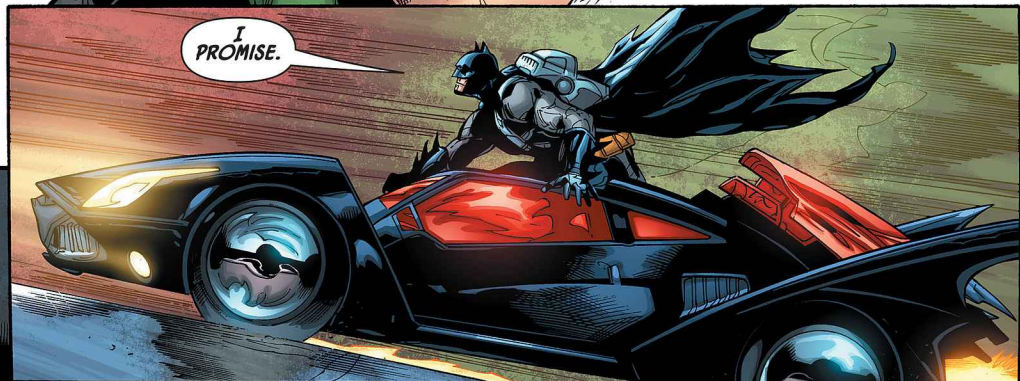
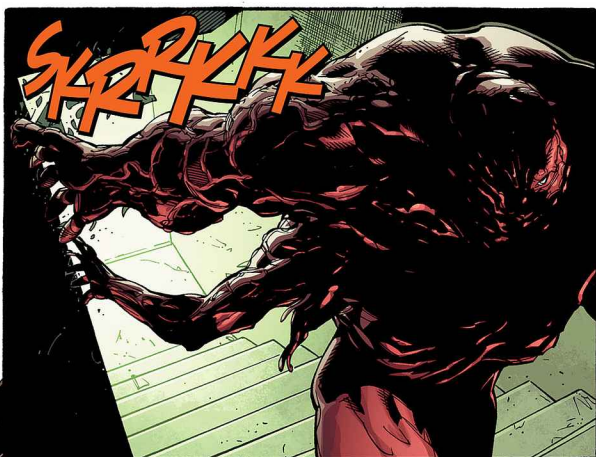
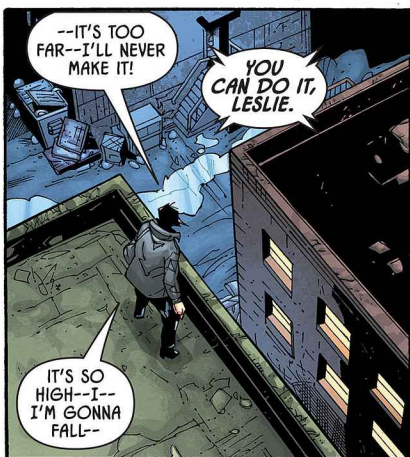
ON IT!



KEEP YOUR
COMM-LINK ON,
I'M TRACKING
YOU.

THIS THING--
BULLETS AREN'T
STOPPING IT--
IT'S HUGE--TOSsing
CARS AROUND
LIKE TOYS!







I'M
A BLOCK
AWAY!

MAKE THE
JUMP, LESLIE--
PLEASE!

IT'S
TURNED AWAY,
BRUCE...

...IT'S
LOOKING
DOWN AT THE
STREET...

RIGHT IN
THE DIRECTION
I NEED IT TO.

I'VE
GOT IT
ATTENTION.

...WAIT...
IT HAD YOUR
SIGNAL LIGHT...
IT'S NOT AFTER
ME...

...IT WANTS
YOU,
BRUCE...

...THIS DARK
CREATURE WANTS
TO KILL YOU...

LESLIE--
FOR GOD'S SAKE--
GET OFF THAT ROOF
NOW!

YOU'RE NOT
TAKING THE ONLY
HOPE THIS CITY
HAS!

LEAVE
THE BOY
ALONE!

SHUNK

THAT'S IT--
ISN'T IT?!



I WAS THE
BAIT!



YOU WANTED
BATMAN...



...WELL,
BE CAREFUL WHAT
YOU WISH FOR, YOU
VILE CREATURE...

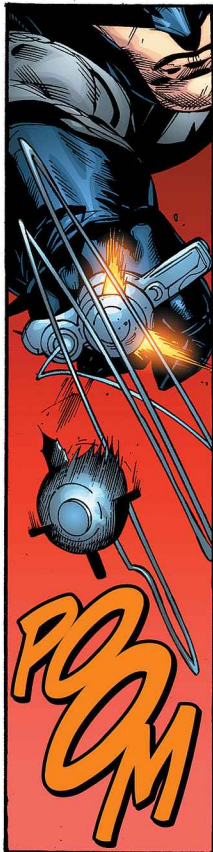
HSSSS

GET YOUR
HANDS OFF
HER!

WRAMMM









...I DON'T
THINK SO AT
AAHAHAHAHAHA!



M · Y · T · H · O · L · O · G · Y

RING THEM BELLS

ALFRED!

I'VE GOT
LESLIE THOMPkins IN
MY ARMS--SHE'S BEEN
EXPOSED TO THE
JOKER'S LAUGHING
GAS!

HAVE A
ROUND OF THE
ANTITOXIN READY
TO GO!

...MY FACE...
BRUCE...

...HAHAHA...

...HURTS
SO MUCH...

...LIKE MY
MOUTH...

...HAHAHA...

...IS
SPLITTING IN
TWO...

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HOLD ON,
EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE
ALL RIGHT ONCE WE GET
BACK TO THE--

...HAHA...

...SO MUCH
I WANT TO SAY,
BRUCE...

...HAHA...

...NEVER
ENOUGH
TIME...

...THAT
HORRIBLE NIGHT
FEELS LIKE ONLY
YESTERDAY...

...HAHAHA...

...YOU WERE
EIGHT YEARS OLD...
HOLDING MY
HAND...

SAVE YOUR
STRENGTH, LESLIE,
PLEASE.



I'M NINE
MINUTES OUT,
ALFRED.

STATUS?

SYNTHESIZING SEVERAL
DIFFERENT TOXINS AS
WE SPEAK.

THEY
WILL BE
READY.



...HAHAHA...

...LITTLE BOY
IN SO MUCH PAIN...
ALWAYS WANTED TO
BE ALONE...

...PUSHED
BACK AT ME
SO HARD...

AND YOU
NEVER GAVE
AN INCH.



YOU AND
ALFRED KEPT
DRAGGING ME
OUTSIDE...

...FORCING
ME TO SEE THAT
LIFE GOES
ON...



...THE
GOOD AND
THE BAD.

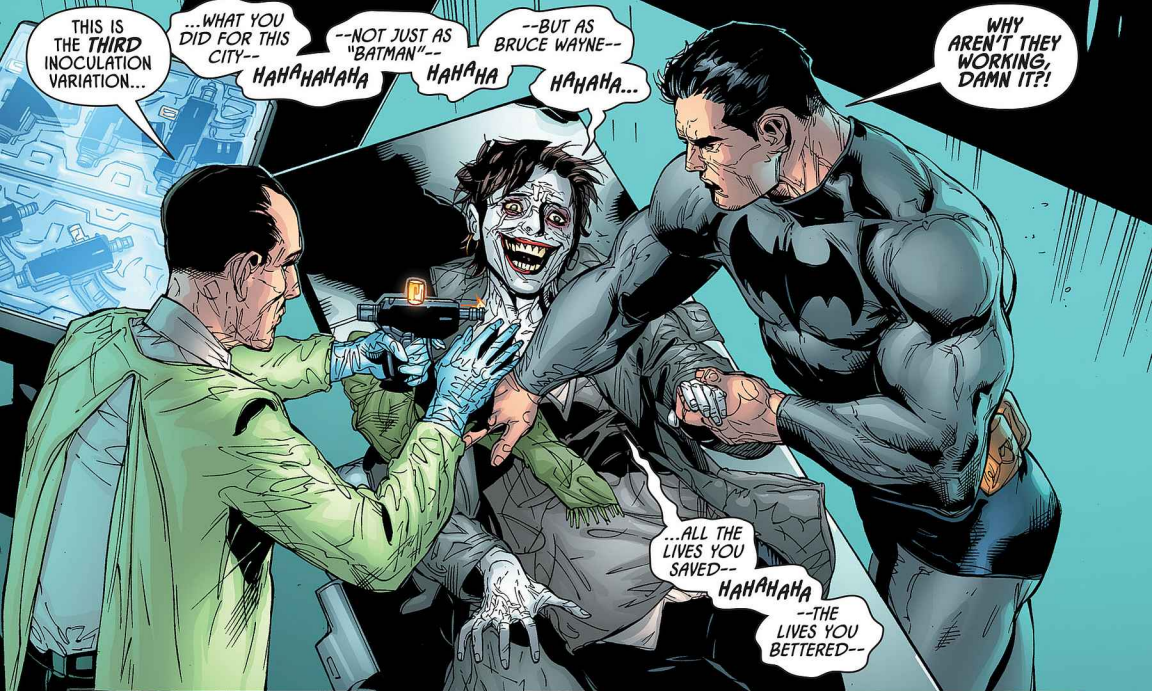
...HAHAHA...

...I DON'T
WANT TO DIE
TODAY...

...SO MUCH
MORE WORK
TO DO...

AND YOU'RE
GOING TO
KEEP DOING IT,
I PROMISE.





THIS IS THE **THIRD** INOCULATION VARIATION...

...WHAT YOU DID FOR THIS CITY--

--NOT JUST AS "BATMAN"--

--BUT AS BRUCE WAYNE--

WHY AREN'T THEY WORKING, DAMN IT?!

HAHAHAHAHA

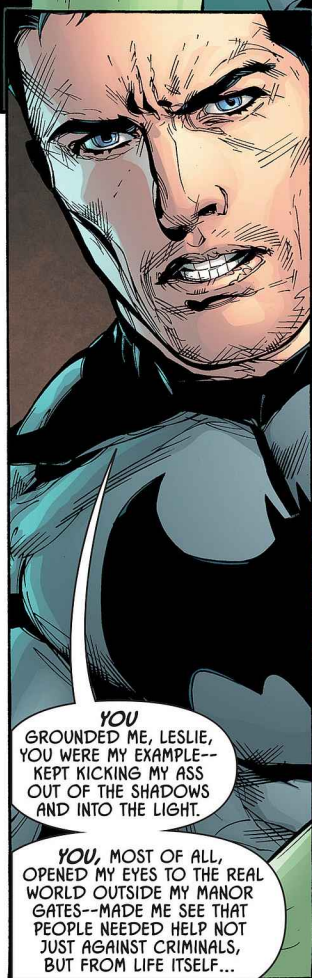
HAHAHA

HAHAHA...

...ALL THE LIVES YOU SAVED--

HAHAHAHA

--THE LIVES YOU BETTERED--



YOU GROUNDED ME, LESLIE, YOU WERE MY EXAMPLE-- KEPT KICKING MY ASS OUT OF THE SHADOWS AND INTO THE LIGHT.

YOU, MOST OF ALL, OPENED MY EYES TO THE REAL WORLD OUTSIDE MY MANOR GATES--MADE ME SEE THAT PEOPLE NEEDED HELP NOT JUST AGAINST CRIMINALS, BUT FROM LIFE ITSELF...



LESLIE IS NOT RESPONDING.

SHE'S BEEN INFECTED WITH A **MUTATED TOXIN VARIATION**...NONE OF OUR ANTIDOTES ARE WORKING.

SHICK

...HEARING YOU SAY THAT--

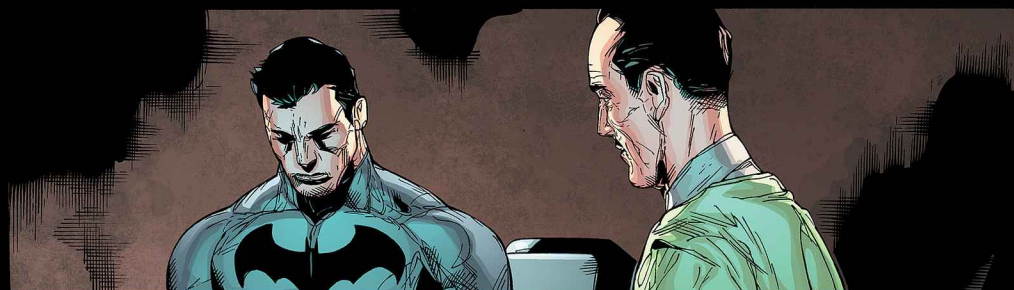
HAHAHA

--MEANS THE WORLD TO ME...



...WHO KNEW THAT WHEN I HELPED A YOUNG BOY... I WOULD HELP SAVE A CITY?... HAHAHA...

...BUT BE CAREFUL... THE WAR YOU'RE WAGING TO KEEP GOTHAM ALIVE... IS ALSO A WAR YOU WAGE AGAINST YOURSELF...



I'M
NOT
LOSING
HER!

CLEAR!

ZAP

YOU
HEAR ME,
LESLIE?!

WE STILL
HAVE
MORE
WORK TO
DO!

ZAP

THE
CITY
NEEDS
YOU!

I NEED
YOU!

CLEAR!



C'MON, DAMN IT!

DON'T GIVE UP!

CHARGING.

CLEAR!

TRAP

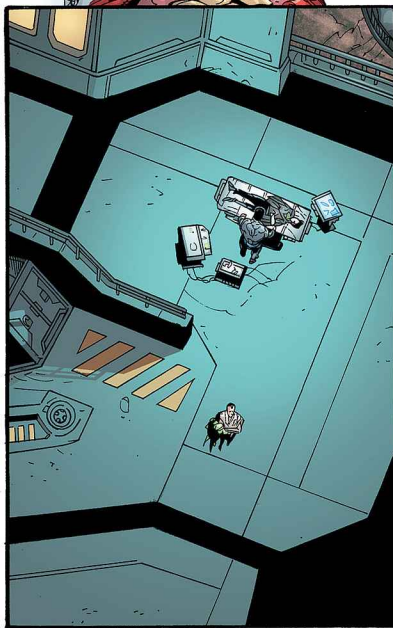
TRAP

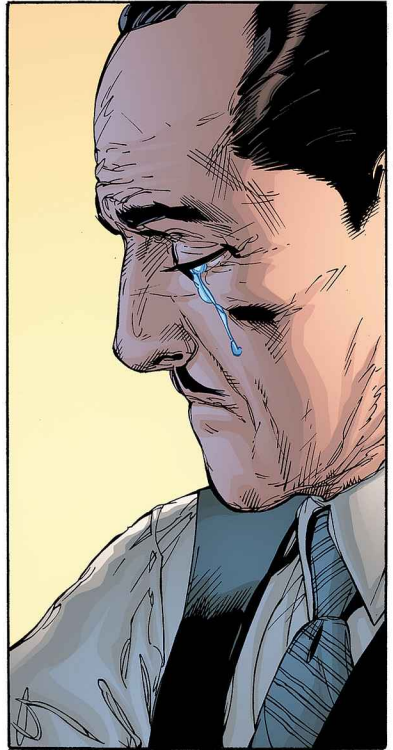
DON'T LEAVE US, LESLIE!

FIGHT BACK...

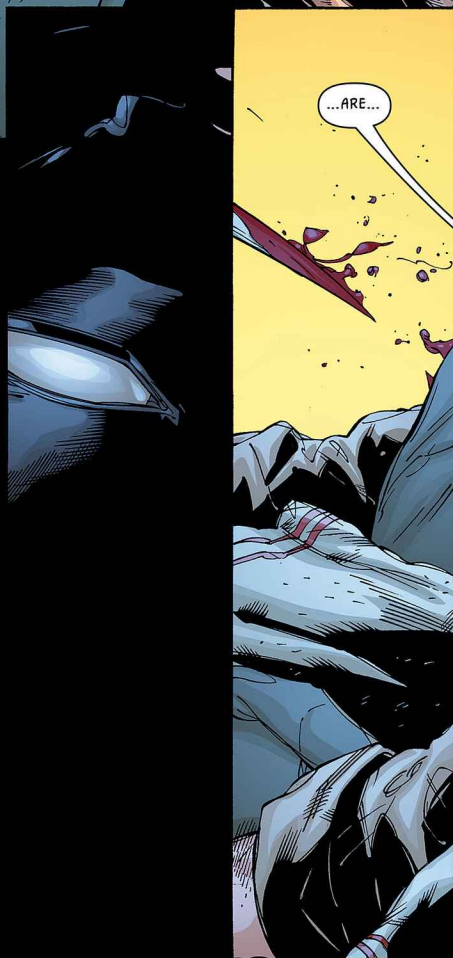
THOMPSONS COURT APARTMENTS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING
ECO-FRIENDLY

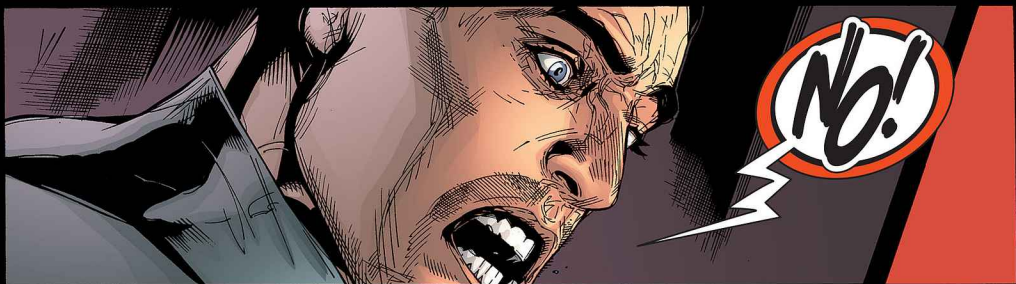


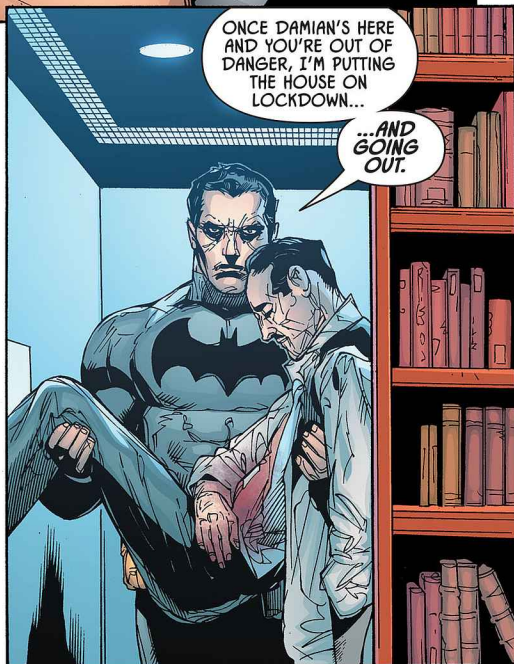












ARKHAM ASYLUM.



DROWNING IN THE STORM OR DROWNING IN PAPERWORK.

WHICH WILL IT BE?



DAMN IT-- HOW MANY TIMES ARE WE GOING TO LOSE--



I NEED TO CONDUCT SOME INTERVIEWS.



YAGHH!

THIS IS **HIGHLY** UNORTHODOX, BATMAN, I DON'T SEE HOW IN GOOD CONSCIENCE I CAN LET YOU--

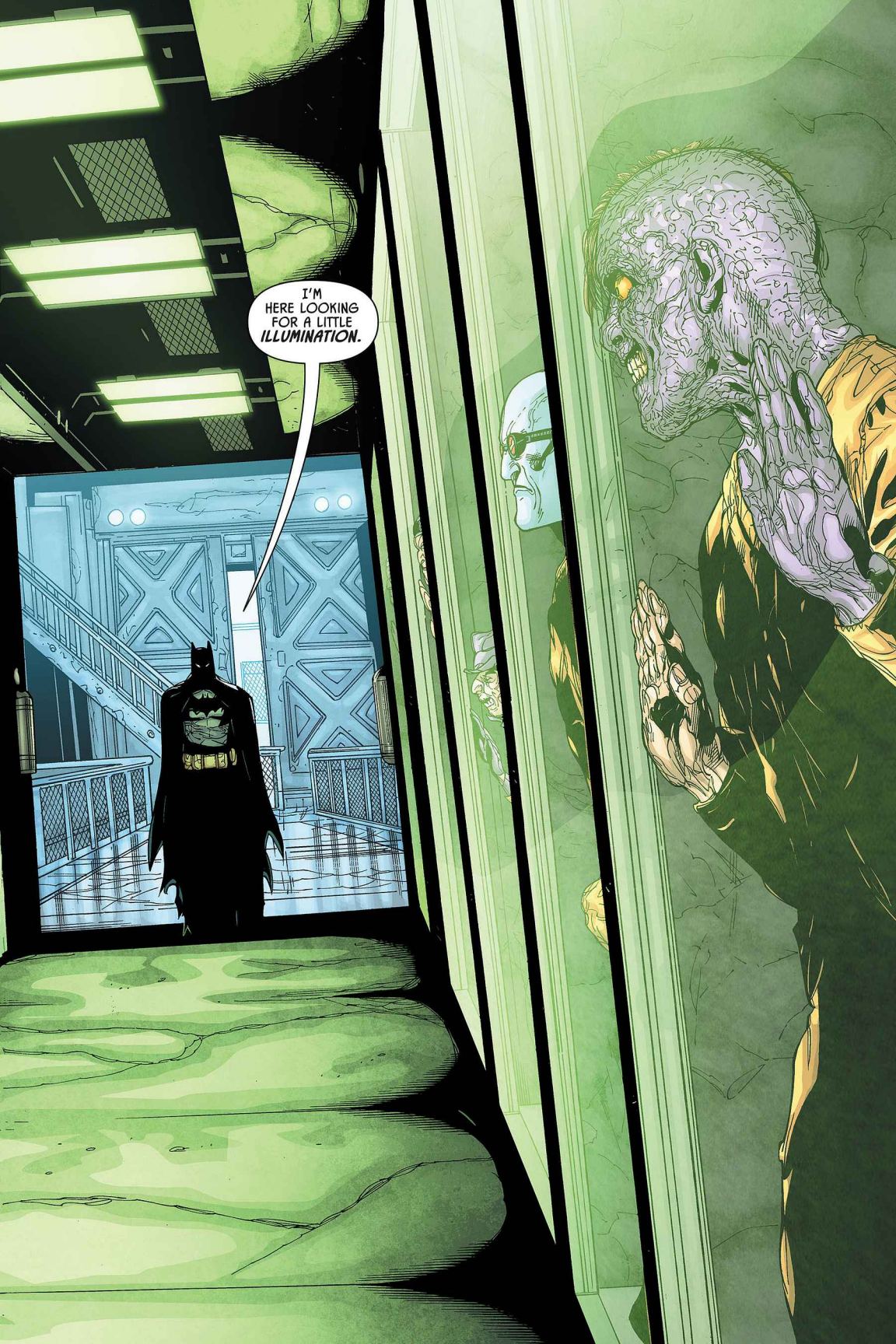


I WASN'T ASKING, DR. ARKHAM.





I'M
HERE LOOKING
FOR A LITTLE
ILLUMINATION.





I HAVE
ONE JOB IN
GOTHAM.



TO
HOLD THE
LINE.



TO KEEP AS **MANY**
INNOCENT PEOPLE FROM
HARM AS I POSSIBLY
CAN.



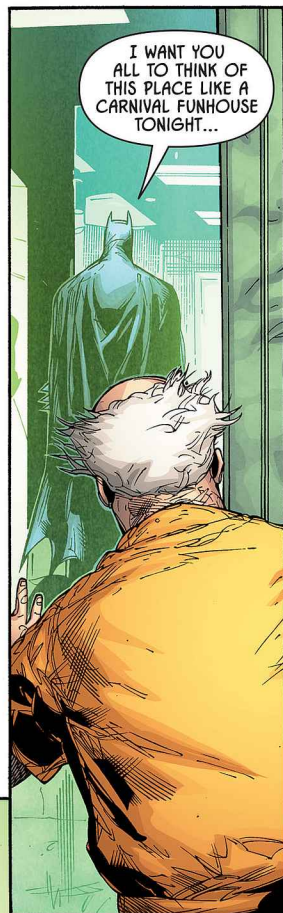
BUT THAT
LINE HAS BEEN
CROSSED IN THE
MOST EGREGIOUS
OF WAYS.



SO,
COOPERATION
AND INFORMATION
ARE OUR WATCHWORDS
THIS EVENING.



ANYTHING
LESS WILL BE...
PROBLEMATIC.



I WANT YOU
ALL TO THINK OF
THIS PLACE LIKE A
CARNIVAL FUNHOUSE
TONIGHT...



...EXCEPT
THE ONLY
MONSTER IN HERE
WITH YOU...

KLKK

...IS *ME*.





WISH
I COULD
BE OF
MORE
HELP.



...I HAVE A
HEADACHE,
DUM...



...AS DO I,
DEE...



REST ASSURED,
SOMEONE **WILL** BE
BILLED FOR MY NEW
FRONT TOOTH AND A NEW
PAIR OF GLASSES.



YOU HURT
GRUNDY.

GRUNDY
HURT YOU.



STILL HAVEN'T FOUND
THAT SPECIAL SOMEONE
TO MELT THAT COLD
HEART, HMM?



MY BODY IS
MY CANVAS.

I DON'T TAKE
KINDLY TO YOU
DEFACING IT.

ONE DAY I'LL
JOYFULLY ADD
YOUR MARK TO A
SPECIAL SPOT I'VE
BEEN RESERVING
JUST FOR YOU.



YOUR LACK OF
MERRY MAKES YOU
SO SCARY.

MY
BLOOD PRESSURE
HAS **DROPPED** NOW
THAT THE **HITTING**
HAS STOPPED.



BYE,
BATS.

DON'T BE A
STRANGER.

ARKHAM ASYLUM.

DON'T
WORRY,
HARVEY.

I WON'T.

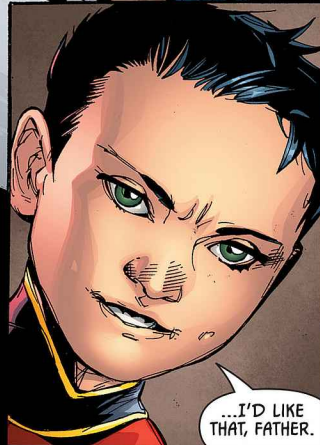
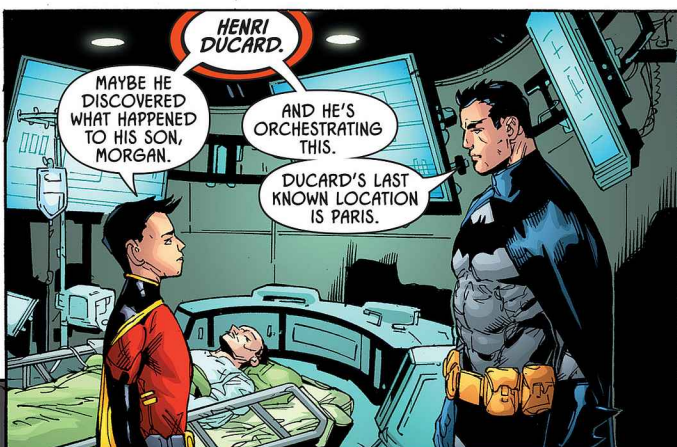
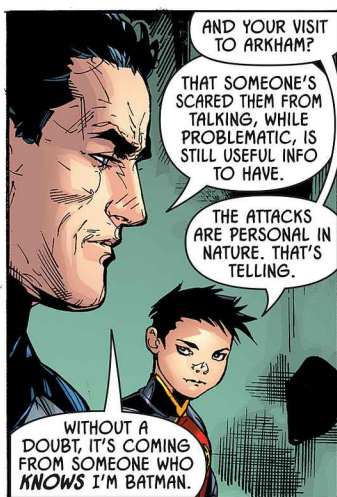
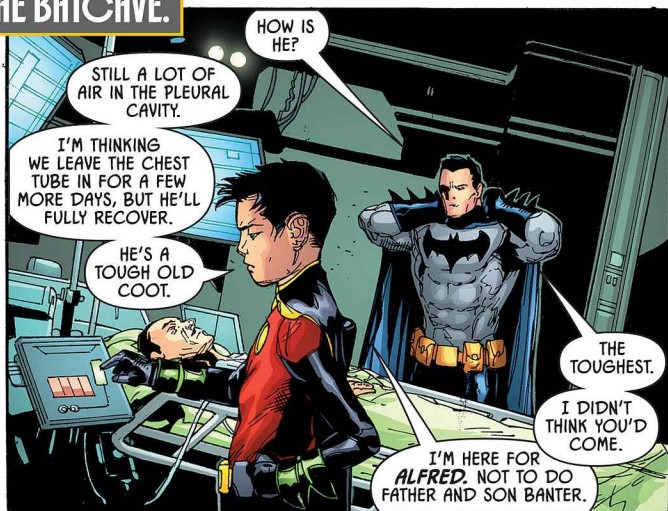


M · Y · T · H · O · L · O · G · Y

SEE PARIS AND DIE!

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THE BATCAVE.



PARIS, FRANCE.

I DON'T
WASTE TIME.

AS ALFRED ALWAYS
SAID, A FEW BASIC
DISGUISES ARE ALL
YOU NEED.

BEST TO START
LOW ON THE
TOTEM POLE...



...LISTEN IN ON LOCAL
ASSASSINS HAPPY TO
GET NEW BUSINESS, WITH
THE "GREAT DUCARD"
SUDDENLY OUT OF
THE PICTURE...



...AND KEEP WORKING
MY WAY UP...



...FROM THE
CREEPS WHO
PULL THE
TRIGGER...

...TO THE ONES WHO
ORDER LIVES TO BE TAKEN
LIKE ENTREES ON A MENU.



I GET A LITTLE CARRIED
AWAY IN DIGGING FOR
SOME FACTS...



...BUT IT'S ALL
IN A DAY'S
WORK...

...UNTIL I GET A
BETTER LOCK
ON DUCARD'S
WHEREABOUTS.



SQUEEE



PLIKK



SQUE---



<I DON'T
APPRECIATE
UNINVITED
GUESTS.>*

*TRANSLATED
FROM
FRENCH.
--CHRIS





EVENING, DUCARD.

NNF!

FRAK

ARMED TO THE TEETH AS ALWAYS.

BAMM

BAMM
BAMM
BAMM

SLAMMM

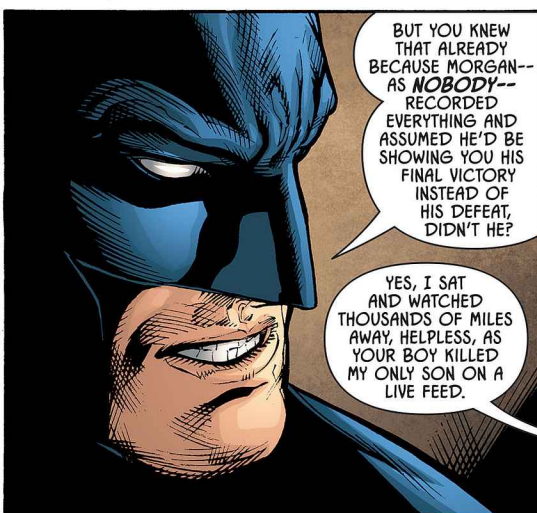
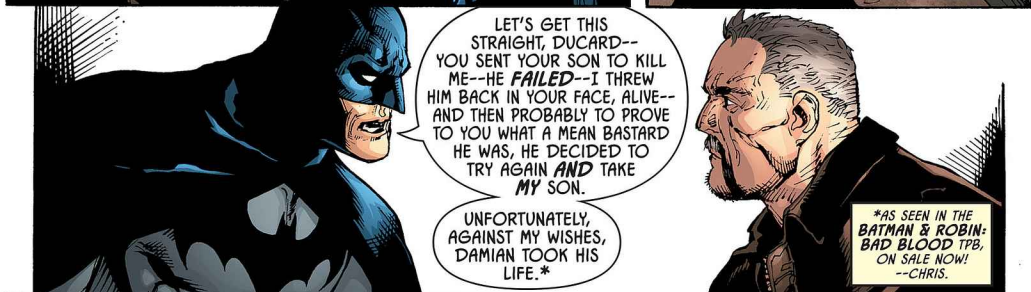
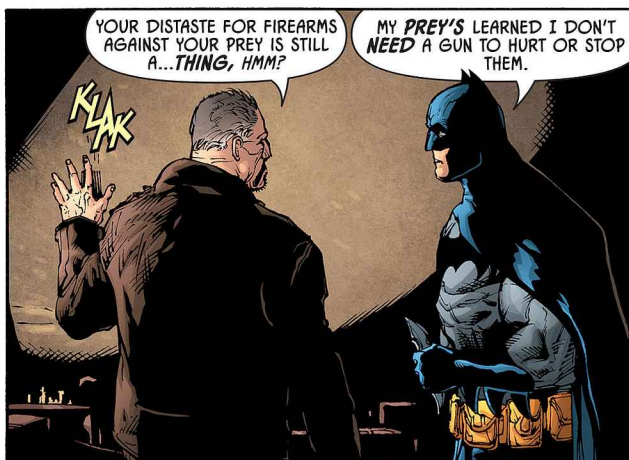
KYKX

HOW DID YOU FIND ME, WAYNE?

ASKS THE HUNTER WHO TAUGHT ME TO HUNT.

I'M ONLY GOING TO TELL YOU ONCE.

GET THAT GUN OUT OF MY FACE.





SO THAT'S
WHAT THIS IS--
A WAR?

YOU'RE **ATTACKING**
AND **MURDERING**
PEOPLE I **CARE** ABOUT
TO AVENGE--

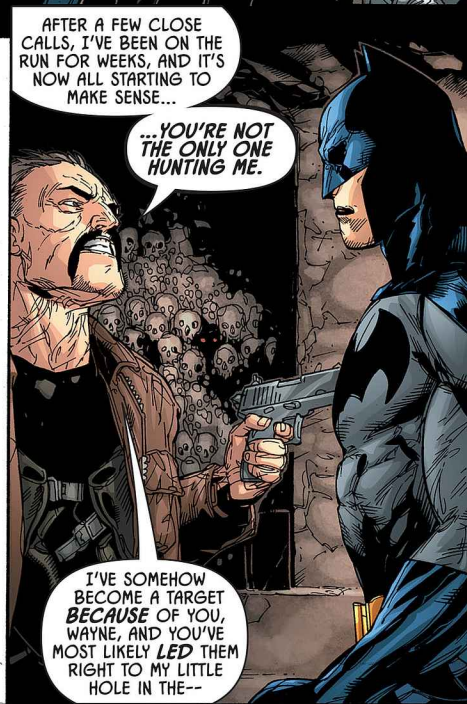


DOES **THIS** ANCIENT
CATACOMB APPEAR TO BE
A BASE OF OPERATIONS
TO YOU?!

DO THESE CANS
OF **SPAM** SIGNIFY THAT
MY SNEAK ATTACK ON
ALL YOU HOLD DEAR
HAS BEGUN?!



MATTER
OF FACT, IT LOOKS
LIKE YOU'RE GETTING
READY TO MAKE A LAST
STAND DOWN HERE.



AFTER A FEW CLOSE
CALLS, I'VE BEEN ON THE
RUN FOR WEEKS, AND IT'S
NOW ALL STARTING TO
MAKE SENSE...

...YOU'RE NOT
THE ONLY ONE
HUNTING ME.

I'VE SOMEHOW
BECOME A TARGET
BECAUSE OF YOU,
WAYNE, AND YOU'VE
MOST LIKELY **LED** THEM
RIGHT TO MY LITTLE
HOLE IN THE--



--GROUND?

HRMM.





I'VE
FOUGHT THIS
THING BEFORE--
IN GOTHAM!

DON'T EXPECT
ME TO THANK YOU
FOR IMPORTING THIS
ABERRATION TO
FRANCE!

THE BAT
THE BAT
THE BAT

BUT IT'S SHIFTING--
EVOLVING--SOME KIND
OF GENETIC MUTATION'S
IN PROGRESS!

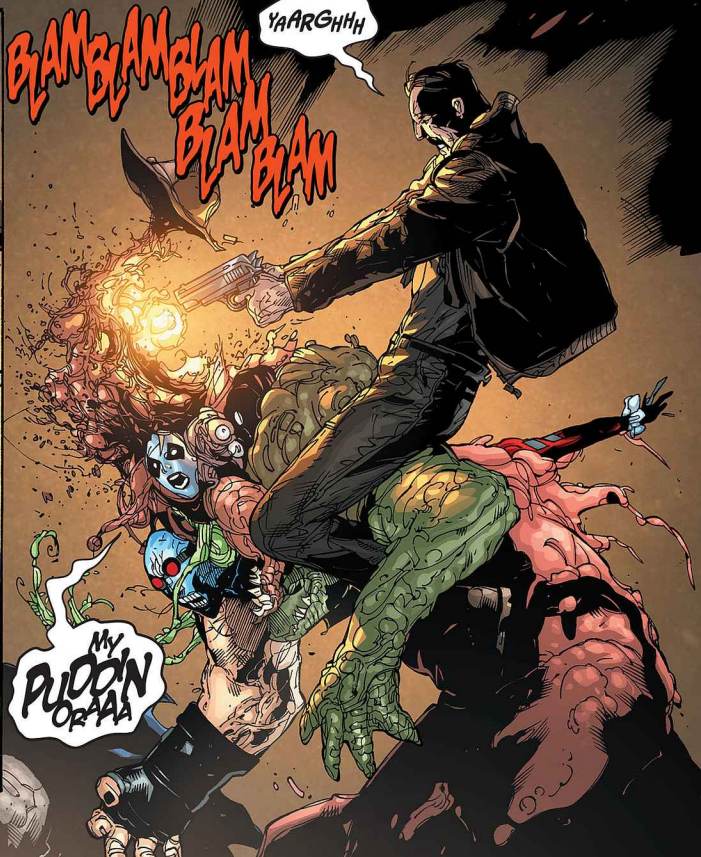
EVERY PSYCHOPATH
I'VE EVER FOUGHT IS
TAKING SHAPE!

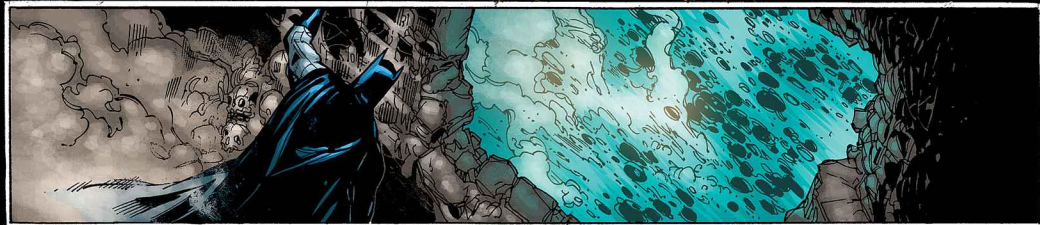
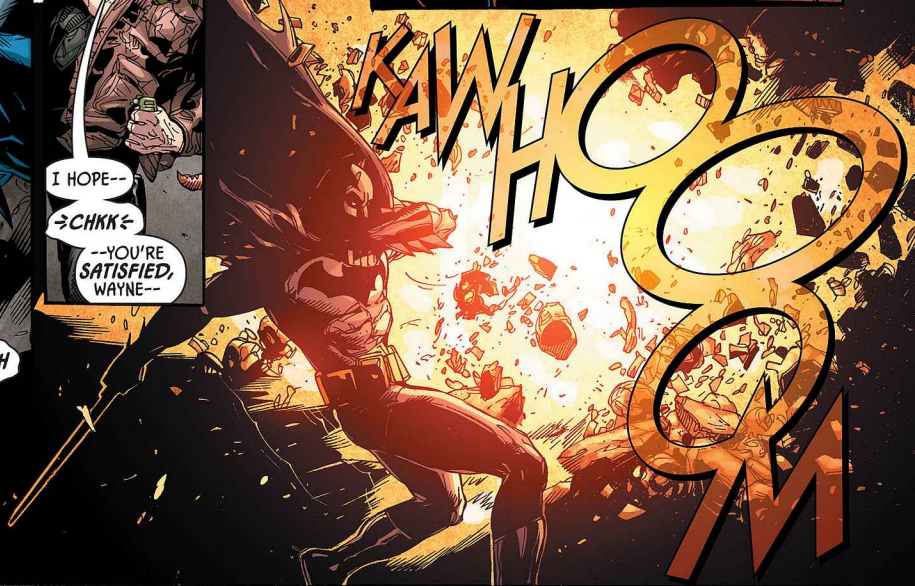


I DON'T CARE--
AS LONG AS IT CAN
DIE, THAT'S GOOD
ENOUGH FOR ME!

BRATTA BRATTA BRATTA BRAT



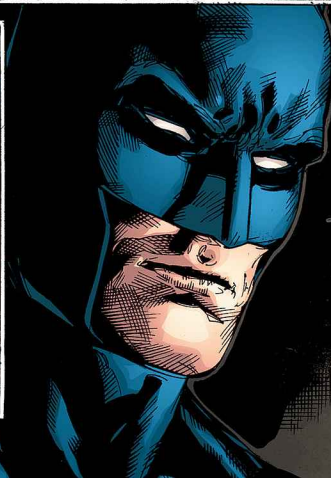




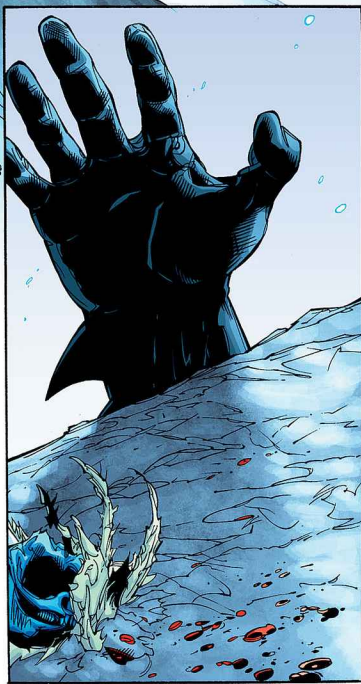
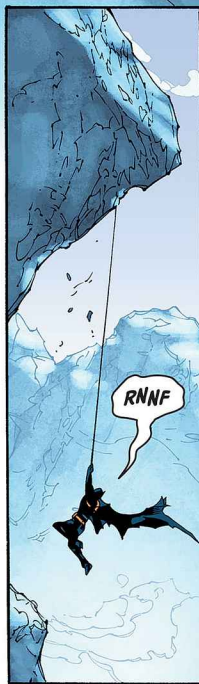
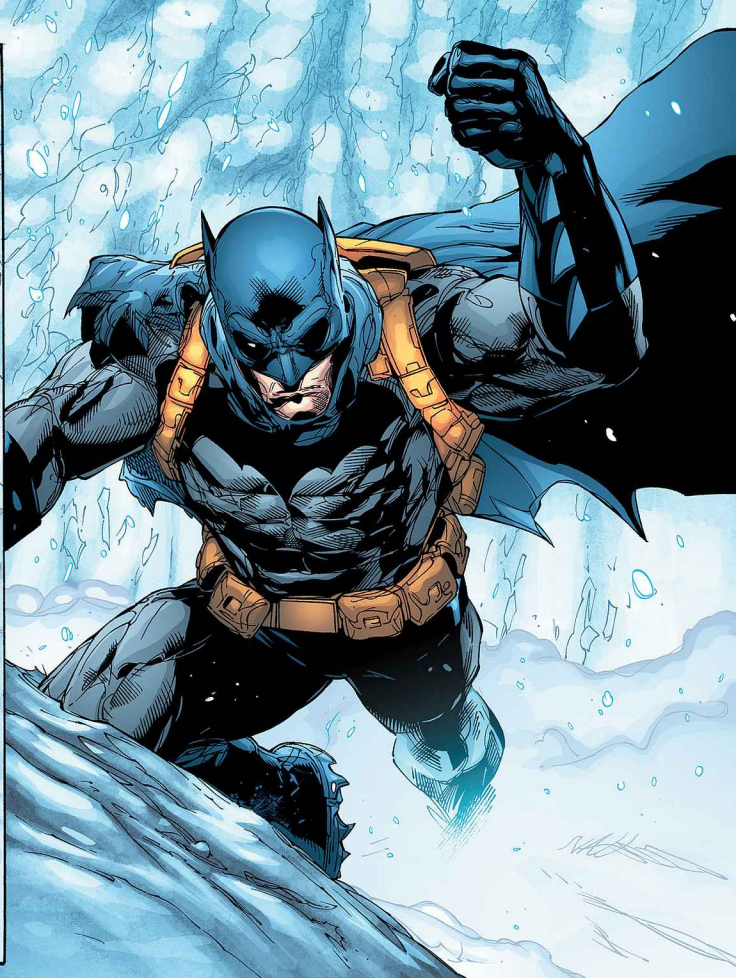
AND SUDDENLY
IT ALL FITS
TOGETHER...

...PEOPLE IN MY
LIFE WHO MADE
ME BATMAN...

...ARE BEING
UNMADE.



PAEKTU-SAN MOUNTAINS.
NORTH KOREA.





...NO...

...BLOODY
BAT SYMBOLS...

...THE TEMPLE'S
NINJUTSU STUDENTS...

...BRUTALLY
MURDERED...

...EVIDENCE OF
A LAST STAND
AGAINST...



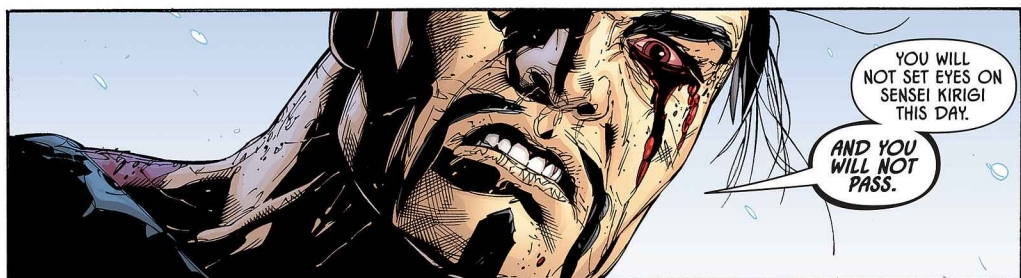
KRAKK

ARGHH

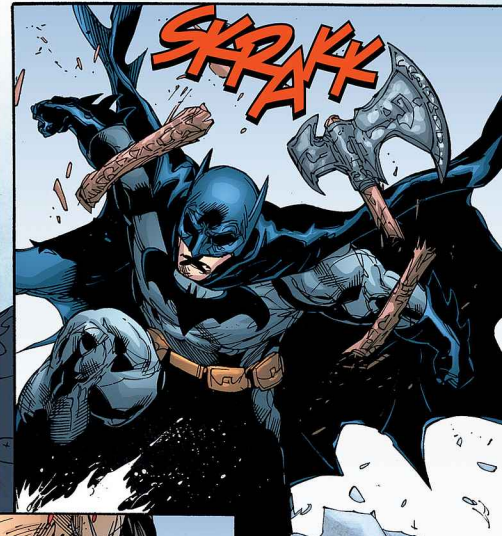
YOU DARE BRING
RUIN TO THE TEMPLE
OF KIRIGI.

WHAT WAS ONCE
A HOUSE OF LEARNING
IS NOW A HOUSE OF
DEATH.











...YOU ALMOST BEAT TO DEATH KYODAI KEN...



...THE LONE SURVIVING STUDENT PROTECTING ME...



SENSEI!



I THANK YOU FOR SAVING MY SENSEI AND NOT TAKING MY LIFE.

NO THANKS NEEDED.

I WAS FOOLISH TO FIGHT INSTEAD OF TALK.

CAN YOU TELL ME ANY MORE ABOUT THE ATTACK?



THE CREATURE POSSESSED MANY GUISES...

...AND REPEATED ONE WORD OVER AND OVER.



"THE BAT."

YES. YOU WILL SEE IT FACES JUSTICE?

ABSOLUTELY.

AND I AM SORRY FOR THE PAIN IT BROUGHT HERE, KYODAI.



LIGHT FOLLOWS DARKNESS.

WE WILL REBUILD.

AND I WILL BE BACK TO HELP.

SAFE TRAVELS, SENSEI WAYNE.



HNNF

ANOTHER TWO HUNDRED METERS AND THE PLANE SHOULD BE HOVERING ON AUTOPILOT...

...READY TO TAKE ME FROM TEN DEGREES BELOW ZERO...

GILA, NEW MEXICO.

...TO 95 DEGREES
AT NIGHT.

A HALO JUMP WAS THE ONLY WAY
TO GET HERE QUICK AND UNSEEN
IN SUCH A DESOLATE AREA.

TRIED CONTACTING
HIM FOR HOURS.

HAVE TO
FIND HIM AND
CONFIRM--

BATMAN!

GET OUT
OF HERE--NOW--
IT'S A TRAP!

THADDEUS!

YOU
SHOULDN'T
HAVE COME!

THE ENTIRE
GROUND IS
FLIPPING
OVER--

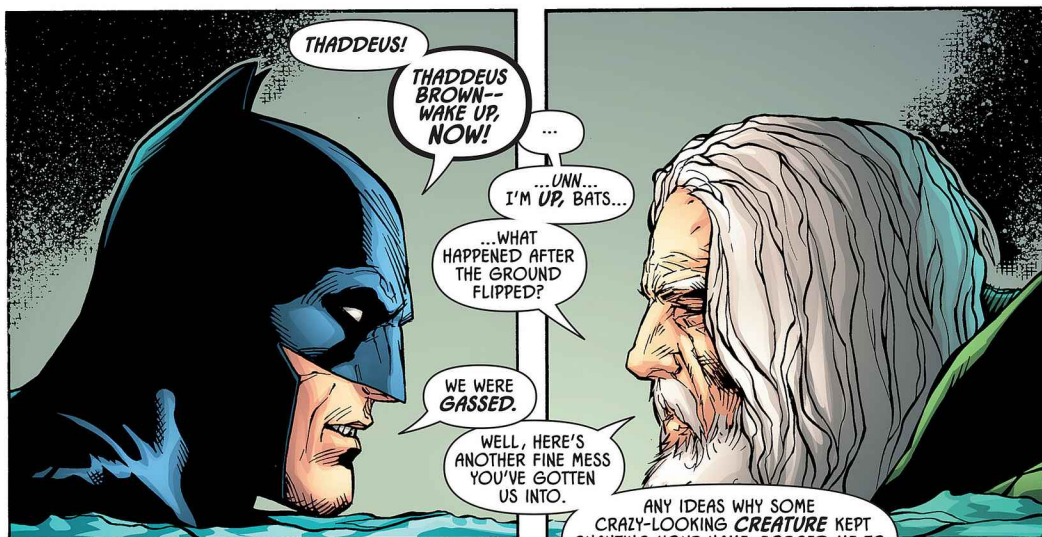
GRAB MY
HAND!

I'LL
STABILIZE
US--
HOLD--

BOOM

LOSING
BALANCE--
CAN'T GET--

THOOM



THADDEUS!

THADDEUS
BROWN--
WAKE UP,
NOW!

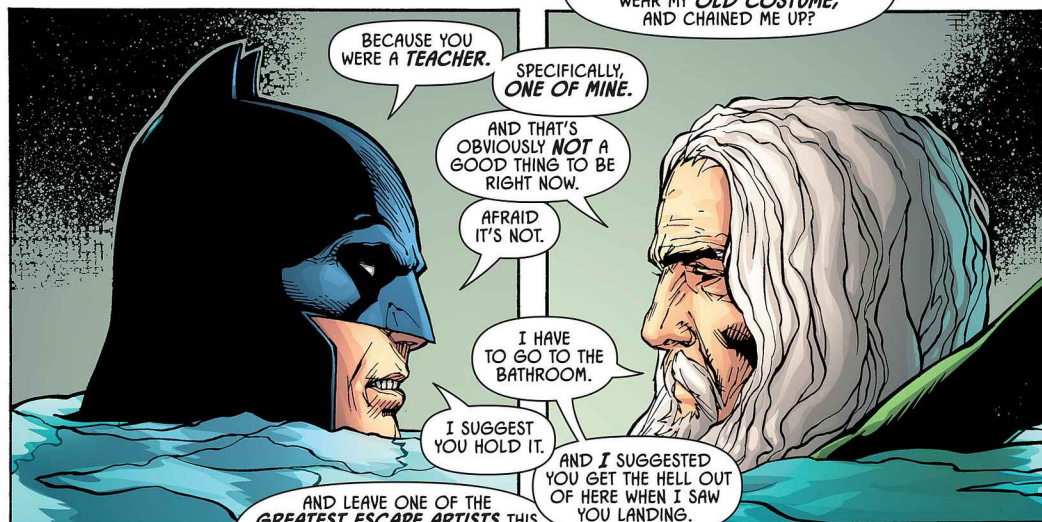
...UNN...
I'M UP, BATS...

...WHAT
HAPPENED AFTER
THE GROUND
FLIPPED?

WE WERE
GASSED.

WELL, HERE'S
ANOTHER FINE MESS
YOU'VE GOTTEN
US INTO.

ANY IDEAS WHY SOME
CRAZY-LOOKING **CREATURE** KEPT
CHANTING YOUR NAME, FORCED ME TO
WEAR MY **OLD COSTUME**,
AND CHAINED ME UP?



BECAUSE YOU
WERE A **TEACHER.**

SPECIFICALLY,
ONE OF MINE.

AND THAT'S
OBVIOUSLY **NOT** A
GOOD THING TO BE
RIGHT NOW.

AFRAID
IT'S NOT.

I HAVE
TO GO TO THE
BATHROOM.

I SUGGEST
YOU HOLD IT.

AND I SUGGESTED
YOU GET THE HELL OUT
OF HERE WHEN I SAW
YOU LANDING.

AND LEAVE ONE OF THE
GREATEST ESCAPE ARTISTS THIS
WORLD'S EVER KNOWN TO DIE ALONE
IN THE DESERT AFTER HE TAUGHT ME--
AND **MR. MIRACLE**--EVERYTHING
HE KNEW?

I WOULDN'T SAY
EVERYTHING. ALWAYS BEST
TO **KEEP A MIRACLE OR TWO**
IN YOUR POCKET FOR A
TIGHT SPOT.

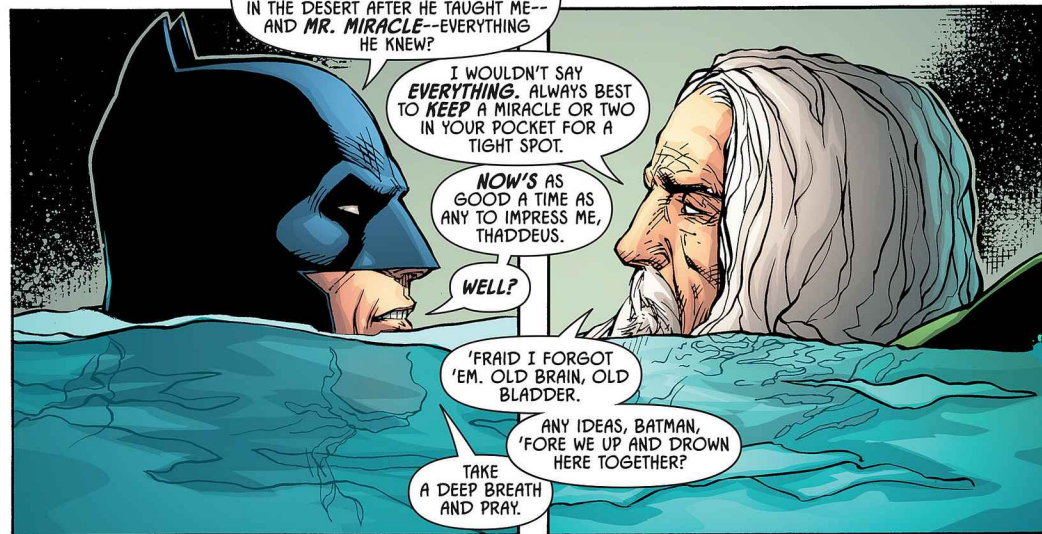
NOW'S AS
GOOD A TIME AS
ANY TO IMPRESS ME,
THADDEUS.

WELL?

'FRAID I FORGOT
'EM. OLD BRAIN, OLD
BLADDER.

ANY IDEAS, BATMAN,
'FORE WE UP AND DROWN
HERE TOGETHER?

TAKE
A DEEP BREATH
AND PRAY.



"ALWAYS WITH THE
OBVIOUS, BATMAN."



M · Y · T · H · O · L · O · G · Y

WAITING FOR A MIRACLE



STORY AND WORDS
PETER J. TOMASI

PENCILLER

DOUG MAHNKE

INKERS **CHRISTIAN ALAMY**

& MARK IRWIN

COLORIST **DAVID BARON**

LETTERER **ROB LEIGH**

COVER **MAHNKE, JAIME MENDOZA**

& BARON

ASST. EDITOR **DAVE WIELGOSZ**

EDITOR **CHRIS CONROY**

GROUP EDITOR **JAMIE S. RICH**

ASSESS.

THADDEUS' LIVING ROOM'S BEEN STAGED FOR THIS.

WINDOWS ARE SEALED WITH SOME KIND OF METAL.

MY TEACHER AND FRIEND'S LUNG CAPACITY ISN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE.

DAMN.

WHOEVER BOUND US TOOK MY UTILITY BELT.

BINDING STRAPS ARE MADE OF LEATHER.

SATURATED LEATHER GETS TIGHTER. PLACED IN PERFECT POSITION.

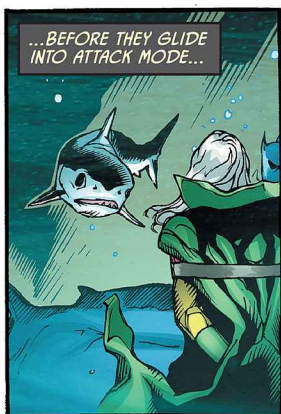
CAN'T SEPARATE EITHER OF MY SHOULDERS TO LOOSEN THEM.

THADDEUS IS BLEEDING.

ZEROING THE SHARKS IN ON HIM.

HE'S DOING HIS BEST TO REMAIN CALM AS THE SHARKS NUDGE AND PROD HIM.

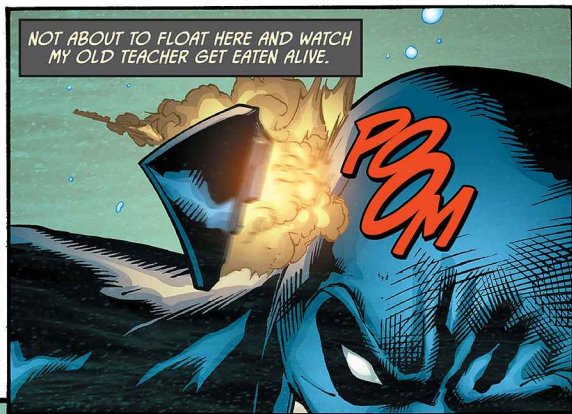
THEY'RE SEEING HOW MUCH OF A THREAT HE IS...



...BEFORE THEY GLIDE
INTO ATTACK MODE...



...AND GO
FOR THE
KILL.



NOT ABOUT TO FLOAT HERE AND WATCH
MY OLD TEACHER GET EATEN ALIVE.



THAT'LL BUY THADDEUS
A FEW SECONDS TO
REPOSITION HIMSELF...

SKITCH



...AND DO
EXACTLY AS HE
TAUGHT ME...



...WHICH IS FOCUSING HARD
AND USING THE TRAP...

...TO GET THE SHARK
WRAPPED UP IN THE STRAP
SO IT DROWNS ITSELF

SHRAP



THAT'S IT.

PAY ATTENTION
TO ME.



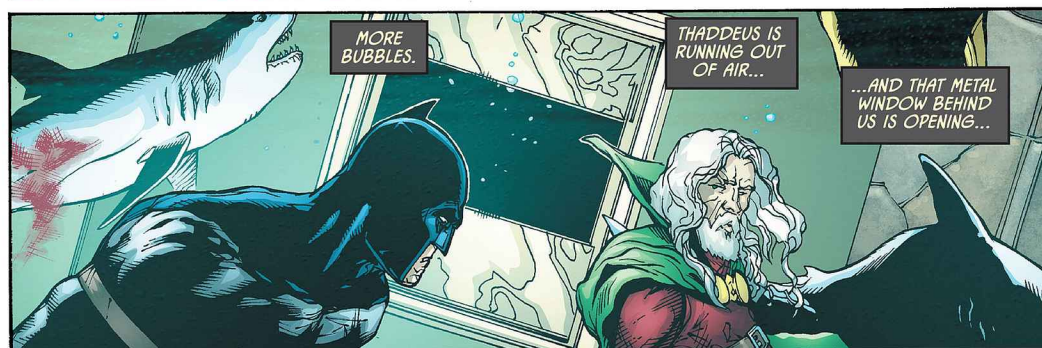
USE THE SHARK'S
MOMENTUM
AGAINST IT...

...AND LET THE
GLOVE SCALLOPS
DO THE WORK...

...ON THE SHARK'S
SOFT UNDERBELLY.



HELP OUR ODDS
AND GIVE US A
FIGHTING--



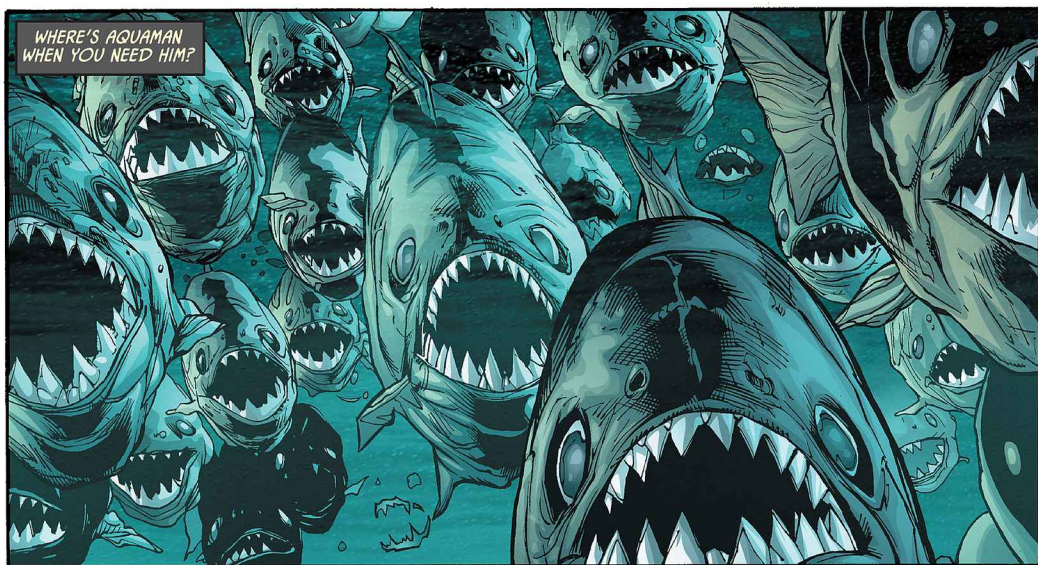
MORE
BUBBLES.

THADDEUS IS
RUNNING OUT
OF AIR...

...AND THAT METAL
WINDOW BEHIND
US IS OPENING...



SO MUCH FOR
OUR ODDS
GETTING BETTER.



WHERE'S AQUAMAN
WHEN YOU NEED HIM?



THE BLOODY SHARKS ARE
RINGING THE DINNER BELL
FOR THE PIRANHAS.

BUY US TIME
BEFORE THEY
REALIZE THERE'S
MORE MEAT
IN THE WATER.

MY SUIT CAN
WITHSTAND
THE BITES.

BUT MY FACE, AND
THADDEUS', CAN'T.



PIRANHAS IN A
FEEDING FRENZY.

JUST NEED ONE
BIG CHUNK OF
SHARK MEAT...



...AND HOPE
IT FALLS
RIGHT WHERE
I NEED IT...



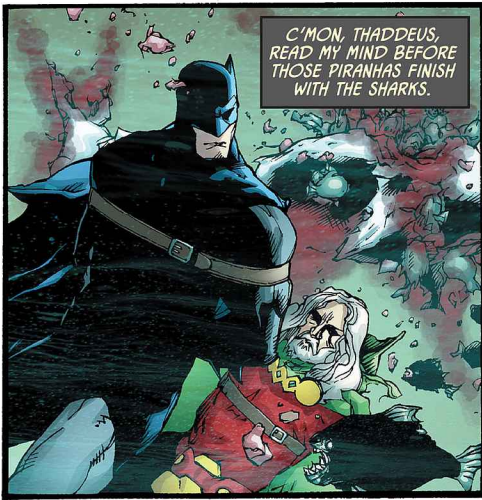
...PERFECT...



...THEY'LL SHRED AND
TEAR THE LEATHER
STRAP AROUND THE
SHARK BAIT JUST
ENOUGH TO LET ME--



--FINALLY--



C'MON, THADDEUS,
READ MY MIND BEFORE
THOSE PIRANHAS FINISH
WITH THE SHARKS.



CHEW AWAY...
I CAN FEEL THE
STRAP GIVING...



...WAY...



UNCONSCIOUS.

HIS EYES ARE
ROLLING
BACK WHITE.



NOT MUCH
TIME.



HOLD ON,
THADDEUS.



WE'RE GETTING
THE HELL OUT
OF HERE.

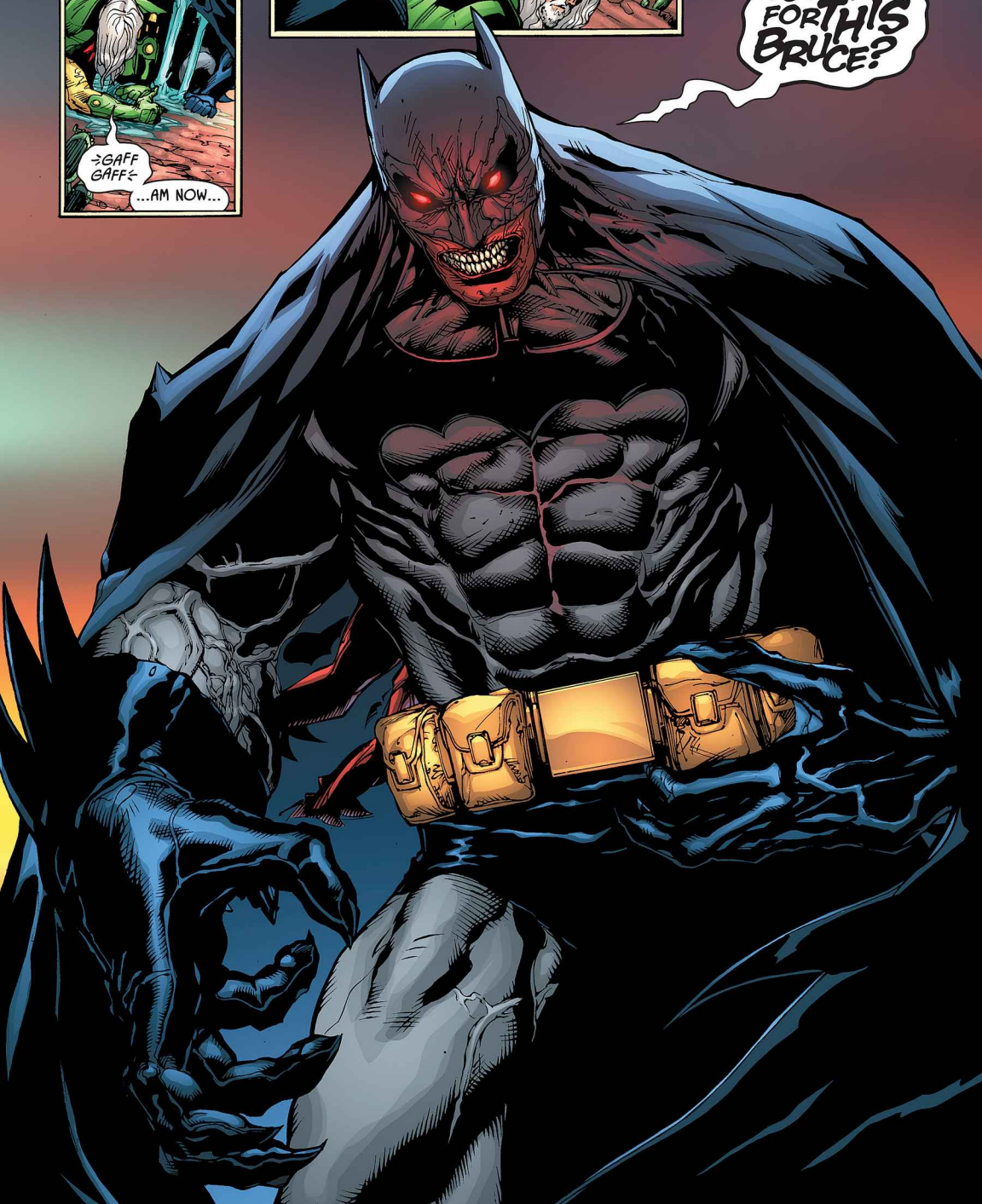


GRAACH!

AAGHH!



LOOKING
FOR THIS
BRUCE?





AS A
MATTER OF
FACT...



...I AM!



SKRAK



I CAN TAKE
EVERYTHING.



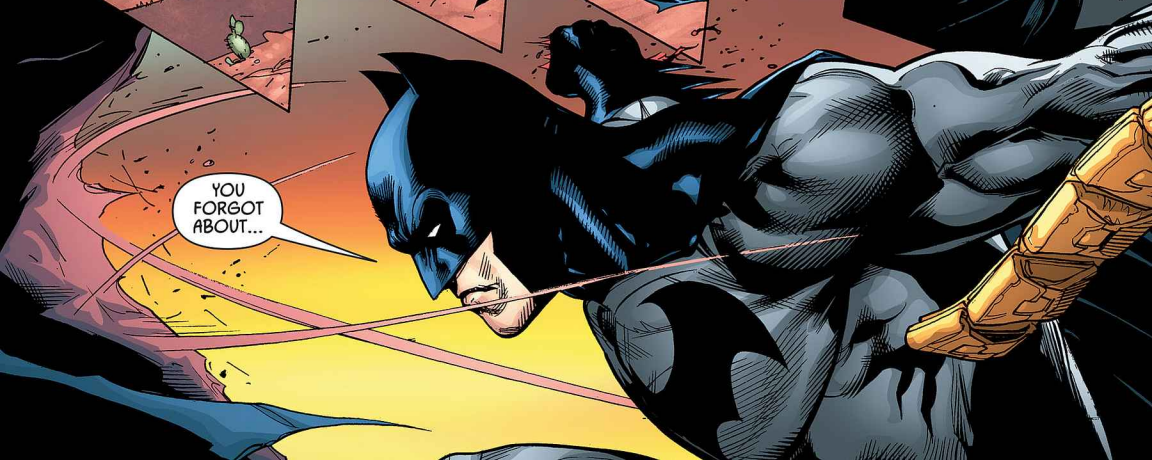
ALL OF IT IN A BLINK
OF AN EYE.



I KNOW
ALL YOUR
SECRETS.



ALL
YOUR
FEARS.



YOU
FORGOT
ABOUT...



...MY
HOPES AND
DREAMS.



HOPE.



HOPE AND
DREAMS
ARE FOR
FOOLS.

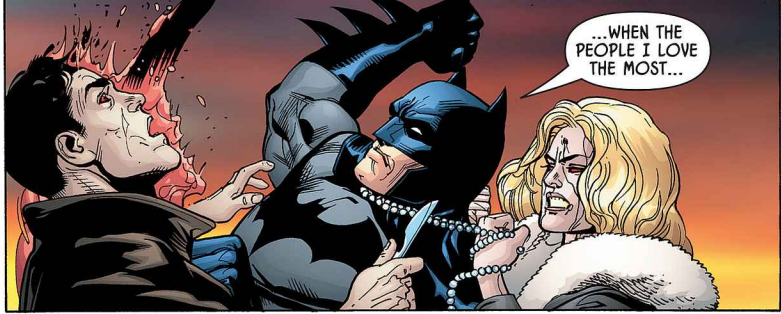


I DREAM
ABOUT LIVING LONG
ENOUGH TO SEE
GRANDCHILDREN,
BRUCE.



I DREAM ABOUT ALL
THOSE PATIENTS I COULD
HAVE SAVED, SON.

AND
I DREAM OF
THE DAY...



...WHEN THE
PEOPLE I LOVE
THE MOST...



...AREN'T USED
AGAINST ME.



WELL, THEN,
WHAT ABOUT THE
PEOPLE YOU HATE,
KID?

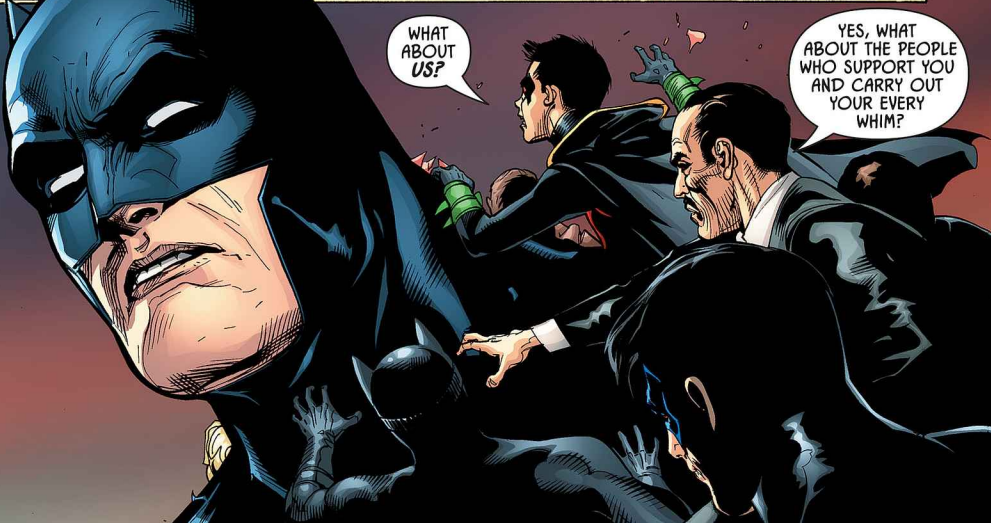
POOM



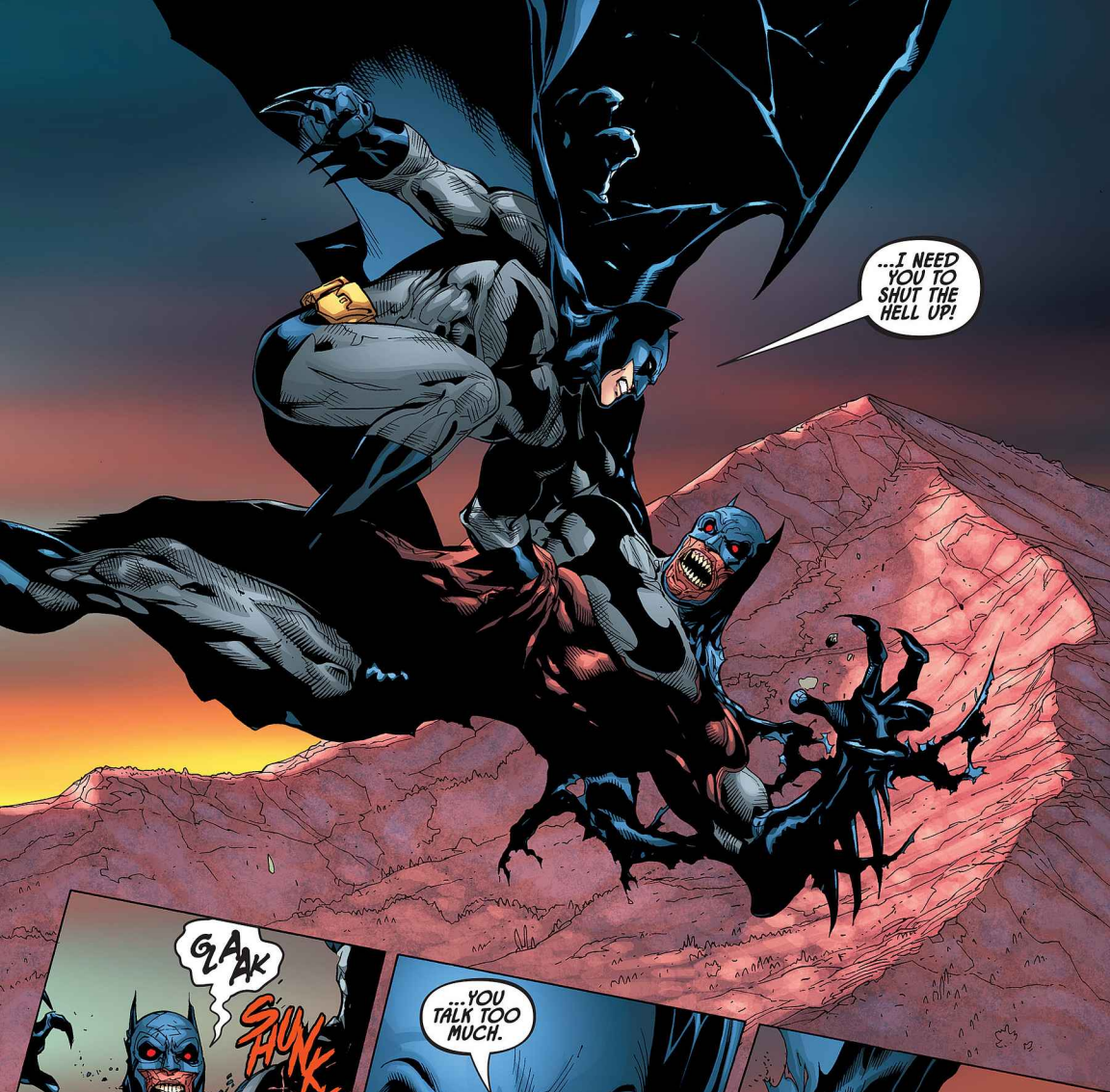
I DON'T
WASTE TIME THINKING
ABOUT THEM.

WHAT
ABOUT
US?

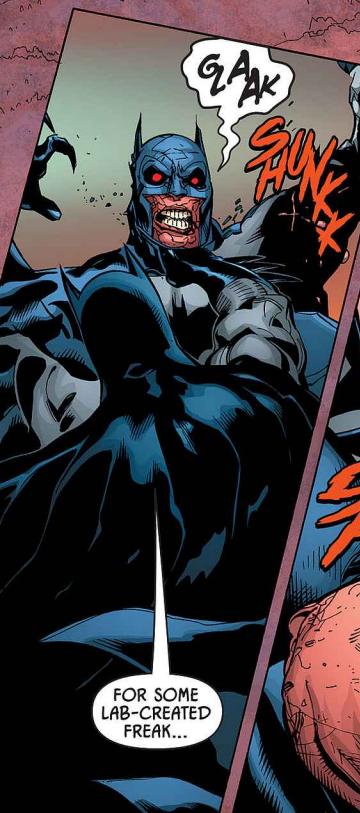
YES, WHAT
ABOUT THE PEOPLE
WHO SUPPORT YOU
AND CARRY OUT
YOUR EVERY
WHIM?







...I NEED
YOU TO
SHUT THE
HELL UP!



GA AK

SHUNK

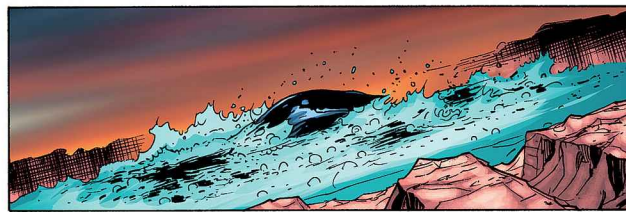
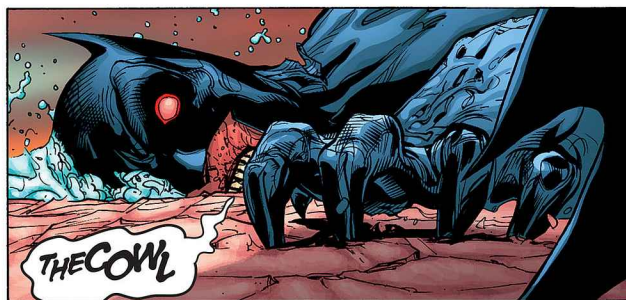


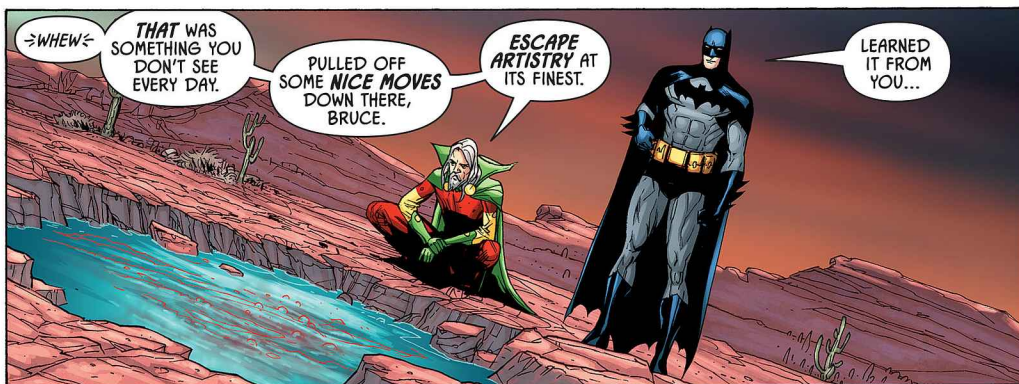
...YOU
TALK TOO
MUCH.

SHUNK

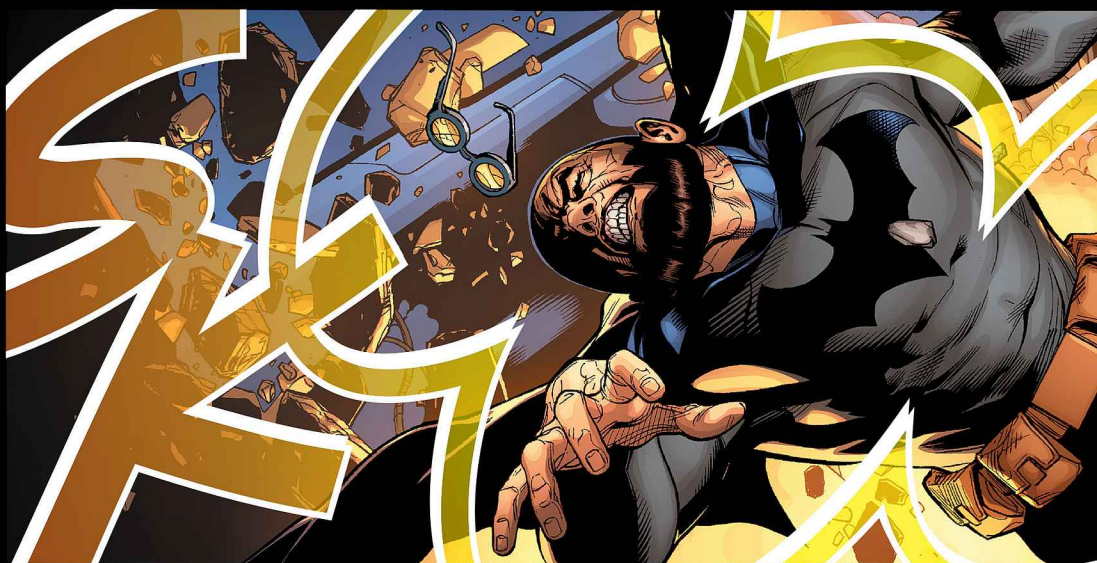


FOR SOME
LAB-CREATED
FREAK...





NINETY MILES NORTH
OF GOTHAM CITY.







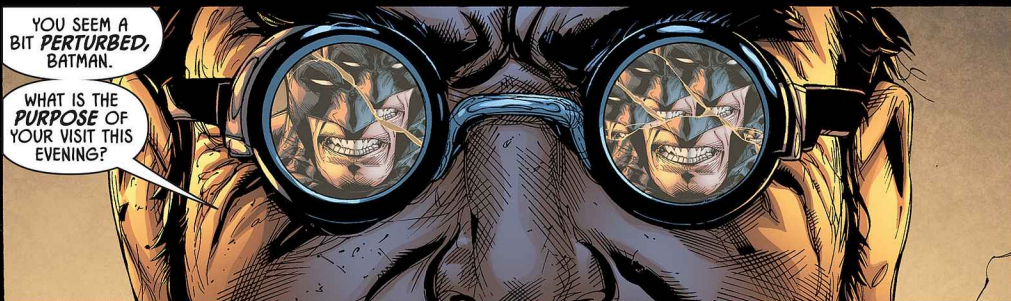
STRANGE!



EVERYTHING.
NOW.

YOU SEEM A
BIT *PERTURBED*,
BATMAN.

WHAT IS THE
PURPOSE OF
YOUR VISIT THIS
EVENING?



YOU KNOW
DAMN WELL WHY
I'M HERE,
STRANGE!



PLEASE...

...*ENLIGHTEN*
ME!

THE
MONSTERS!



I HAVE
NO IDEA WHAT
YOU'RE *TALKING*
ABOUT!

WE'LL JUST
SEE ABOUT
THAT.





UP TO YOUR
OLD TRICKS AGAIN,
STRANGE?!

BASTARDIZING
SCIENCE FOR YOUR
UNHOLY WAYS.

ATTACKING
NOT JUST ME--
BUT PEOPLE I *CARE*
ABOUT!



EACH OF THEM ARE IN
DIFFERENT GROWTH STAGES,
BUT *THIS* TIME THEY ALL
LOOK LIKE *YOU*!

ARE THESE
THE *NEXT* GROUP
YOU'RE SENDING
MY WAY ON THEIR
KAMIKAZE
RUNS?

THESE
SPECIMENS ARE
THE *ONLY ONES*
I'M WORKING
ON.

NONE
OF THEM HAVE
STEPPED FOOT
OFF THE
GROUNDS.



BUT TELL
ME MORE ABOUT
THESE *OTHER...*
MONSTERS.

BIG, STRONG,
ABILITY TO MORPH,
FLY, TAKE ON LIKENESSES
OF CREEPS I'VE THROWN
IN ARKHAM, PEOPLE
I FIGHT ALONGSIDE--
EVEN *MYSELF*.



AMAZING.

NONE OF
MY CREATURES ARE
AS SOPHISTICATED
AS *THAT*.

WHAT YOU
AND YOUR BAT-FAMILY
DESTROYED *RECENTLY*
IS AT THE *TOP* OF MY
CAPABILITIES.*

*SEE THE
BATMAN:
NIGHT OF THE
MONSTER MEN
TPB! --CHRIS

YOU MUST HAVE SOME OF THEIR **CELLS** ON YOUR GLOVE AFTER HITTING THEM--LET ME GET A SLIDE--SCRAPE SOME SAMPLES--THE **PSYCHOLOGICAL** ASPECTS OF THIS ARE...ARE...

YOU'RE **DELUSIONAL** IF YOU THINK I'D LET THAT HAPPEN.

YOUR NEXT STOP AFTER I TIE THIS UP IS ARK--

SIR.

YES.

JASON BLOOD IS REACHING OUT TO YOU.

PATCH HIM IN.

BLOOD.

IT'S COME THROUGH AND I CAN'T--

WHAT'S COME THROUGH?

BLOOD?

HELLO?

LET ME HELP YOU UNCOVER WHAT TORTURED EPISODE YOU ENDURED THAT MADE YOU PUT ON THE COWL...

WE LOST THE CALL.

FLY THE PLANE BACK ON AUTOPILOT AND SEND THE **HB SUIT** TO MY CURRENT COORDINATES ON CLOAK MODE.

...WE'LL DELVE DEEP TO FIND OUT WHAT MAKES YOU **TICK**, BATMAN.

FOUND OUT A LONG TIME AGO...

KRAK

...WHAT MAKES **ME** TICK, STRANGE.

IT CONTINUES.

I WAS WRONG
ABOUT STRANGE.

AND THIS CURRENT
ATTACK IS NO
COINCIDENCE.

BLOOD IS
ON MY LIST.

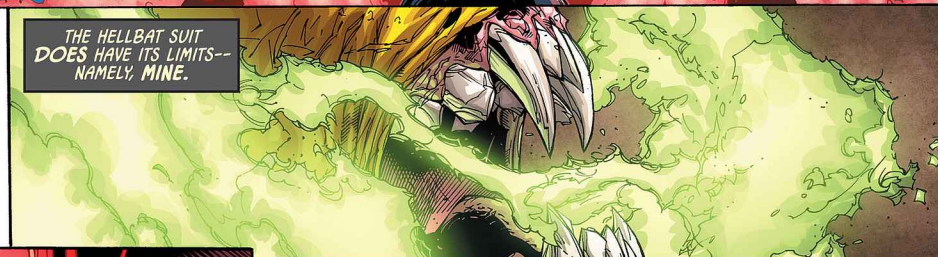
I WENT TO
HIM EARLY ON,
AFTER ZATARA.

CRIMINALS ARE A
SUPERSTITIOUS AND
COWARDLY LOT.

AND WHEN IT
CAME TO LEARNING
ABOUT FEAR AND
INTIMIDATION,
I COULDN'T IMAGINE
A BETTER TEACHER
TO GO TO...

...THAN A MAN WHO'S BEEN
FORCED TO LIVE WITH A
RAGING DEMON INSIDE
HIM FIGHTING TO GET OUT.

BOOM

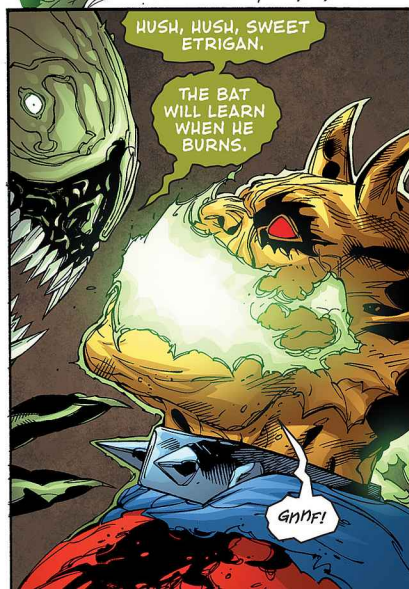


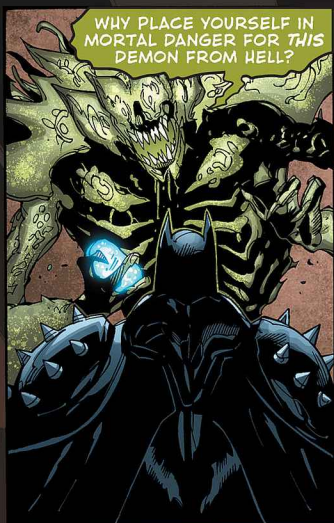
ETRIGAN!

GRNNH!

SKRAASH







WHY PLACE YOURSELF IN MORTAL DANGER FOR THIS DEMON FROM HELL?



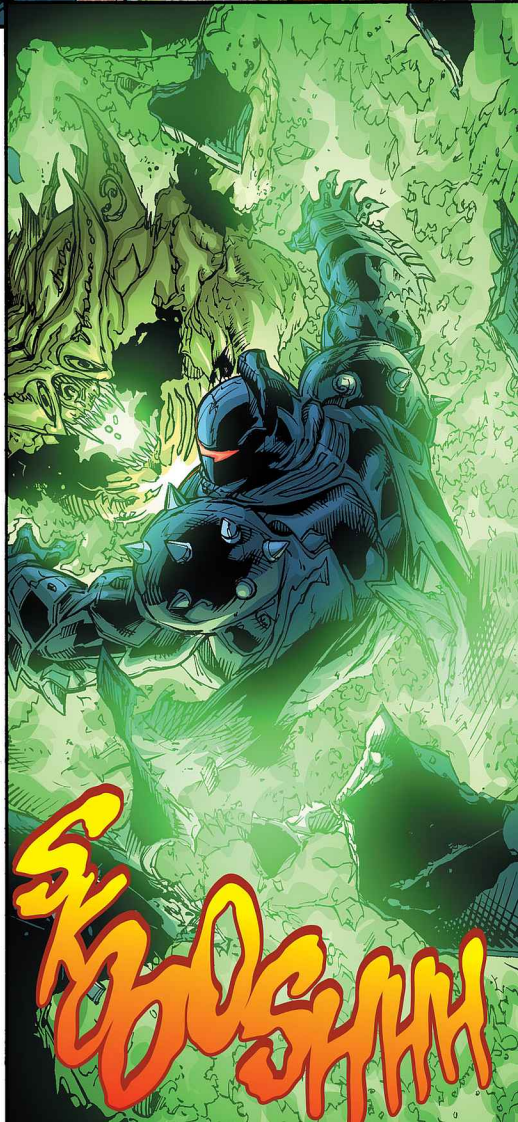
BECAUSE THE MAN NAMED BLOOD CHAINED TO ETRIGAN IS A FRIEND.

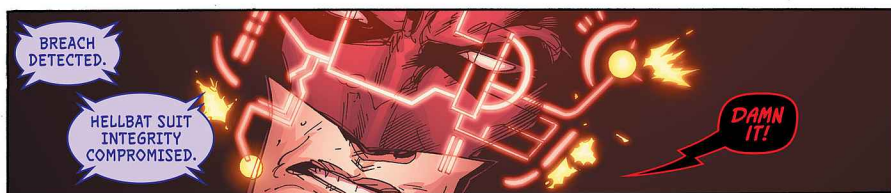


IF YOU STAND IN MY WAY, I'LL DRAG YOUR SOUL BACK TO HELL WITH ME.



WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'M AFRAID OF HELL?!







INITIATE
DEVASTATOR.

NINETY PERCENT
CHANCE PHYSIOLOGY
WILL NOT BE ABLE TO
WITHSTAND SYNTHESIZED
POWER SURGE.

ENGAGE.



NINETY-FIVE
PERCENT CHANCE OF
CARDIAC ARREST.



I SAID
DO IT.



CAPACITOR
AT FULL
CHARGE.



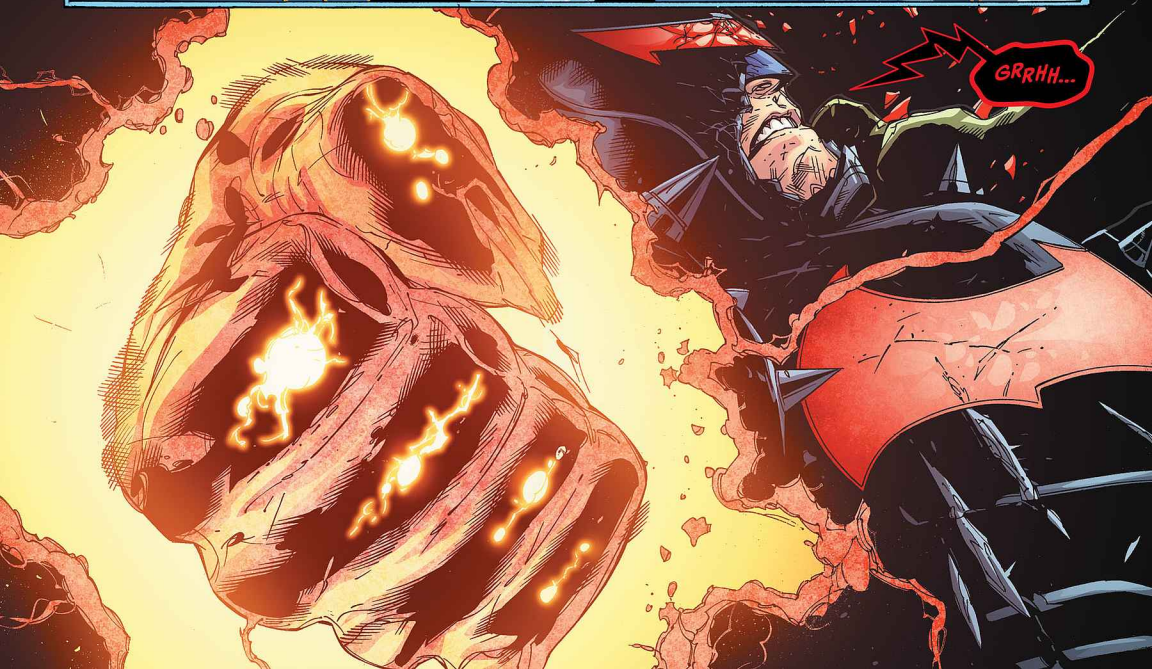
ROUTE ALL
POWER TO
RIGHT HAND,
NOW.



ROUTING...



DEVASTATOR
SYNTHESIS
COMPLETE.



GRHH...

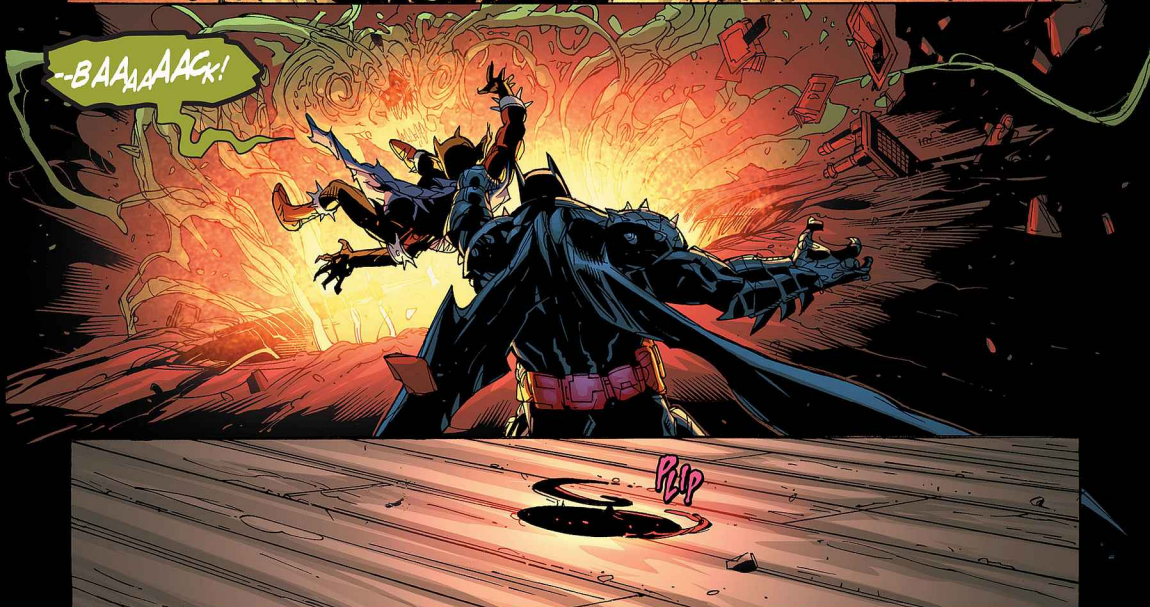


BAK

REDIRECT DESCENT ANGLE.

TAKE US BACK TO LAUNCH POINT.

REDIRECTING...





THOUGH
I AM LOATH
TO SAY IT,
A THANK YOU
HAS PAID IT.

I CAME TO
SAVE BLOOD,
NOT A DEMON
FROM HELL.

SO IF YOU
WANT TO EXPRESS
YOUR THANKS IN A
MEANINGFUL WAY,
YOU'LL--



enough!

IF IT'S
THE MEAT AND
BONES YOU
WANT...



...THEN
IT'S THE MEAT
AND BONES YOU
SHALL HAVE.



GONE NOW,
O ETRIGAN,
THE BATTLE HAS
BEEN FOUGHT
AND WON.

JASON
BLOOD
WITH ME IS
DONE!



MM.

I NEVER GET USED TO SEEING YOU TRANSFORM LIKE THAT.

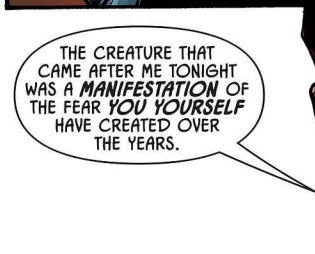
NEITHER DO I.

HELLBAT DISENGAGE.



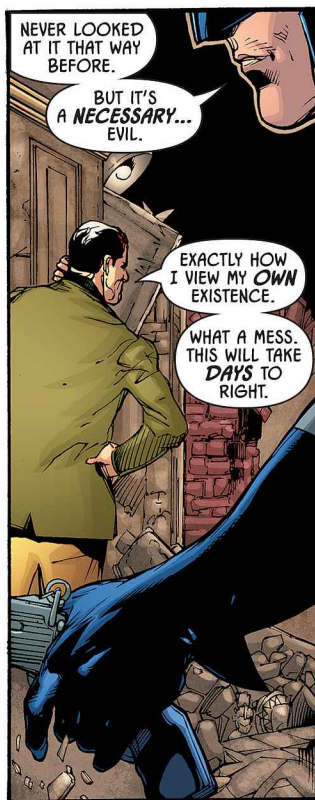
IMPRESSIVE ARMOR, BRUCE. YOU **DO** TEND TO BE ALWAYS PREPARED.

THAT CREATURE... IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN, BUT IT FELT LIKE A **PART** OF ME.



THE CREATURE THAT CAME AFTER ME TONIGHT WAS A **MANIFESTATION** OF THE FEAR **YOU YOURSELF** HAVE CREATED OVER THE YEARS.

I'VE FOUND THAT TAKING INTIMIDATION TO THE NEXT LEVEL CAUSES YOU TO **LOSE** A LITTLE PART OF YOURSELF.

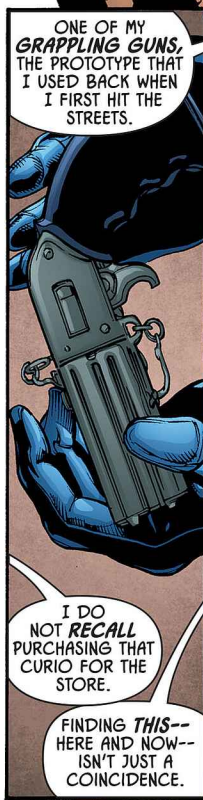


NEVER LOOKED AT IT THAT WAY BEFORE.

BUT IT'S A **NECESSARY...** EVIL.

EXACTLY HOW I VIEW MY **OWN** EXISTENCE.

WHAT A MESS. THIS WILL TAKE **DAYS** TO RIGHT.



ONE OF MY **GRAPPLING GUNS**. THE PROTOTYPE THAT I USED BACK WHEN I FIRST HIT THE STREETS.

I DO NOT **RECALL** PURCHASING THAT CURIO FOR THE STORE.

FINDING **THIS--** HERE AND NOW-- ISN'T JUST A COINCIDENCE.



I NEED TO **BE** SOMEWHERE, BLOOD.

GOT A TRAVEL SIGIL IN YOUR POCKET?

ALWAYS.



JUST TELL ME **WHERE**.





I CAME
HERE TO **SAVE**
YOU.



DOES IT **LOOK**
LIKE I NEED
SAVING?



NO,
NOT AT THE
MOMENT.

AND JUST
WHO ARE YOU
HERE TO SAVE
ME **FROM**?



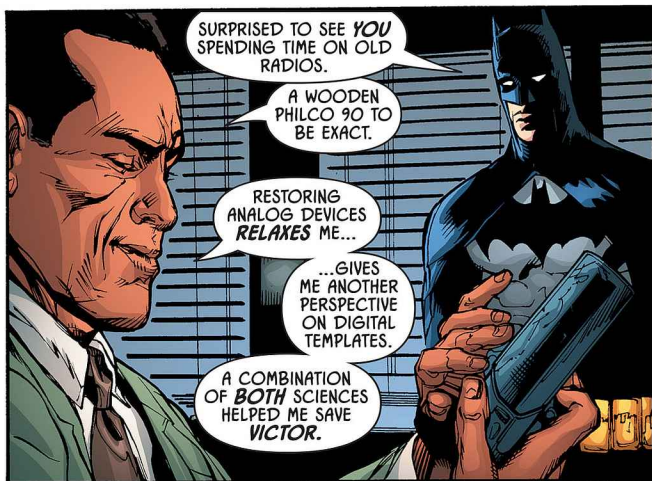
SOMEONE...SOMETHING
HAS BEEN TRYING TO **KILL**
EVERYONE WHO'S BEEN A
TEACHER, GUIDE OR
MENTOR TO ME...

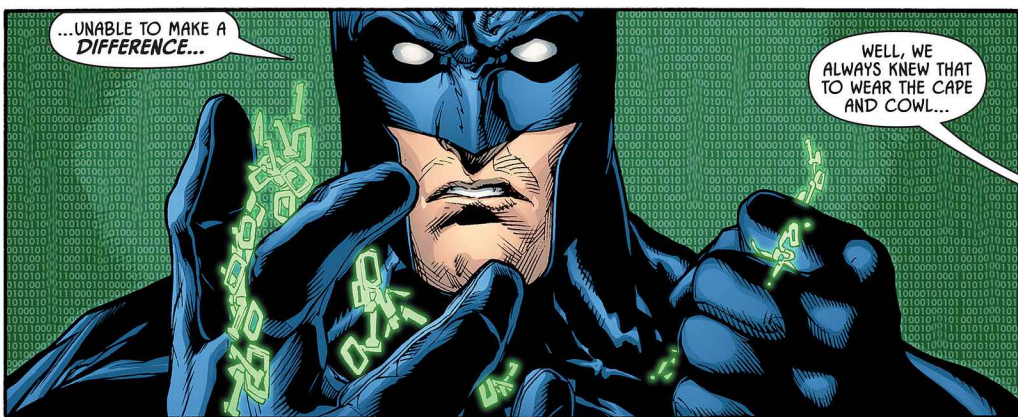
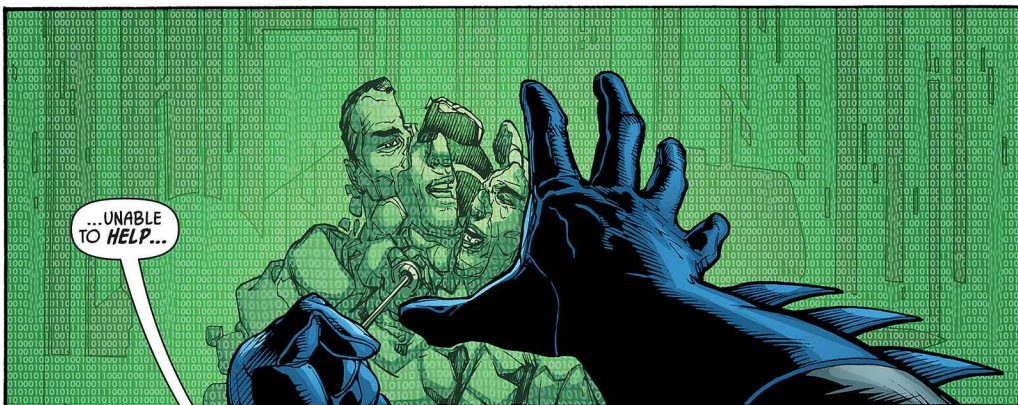
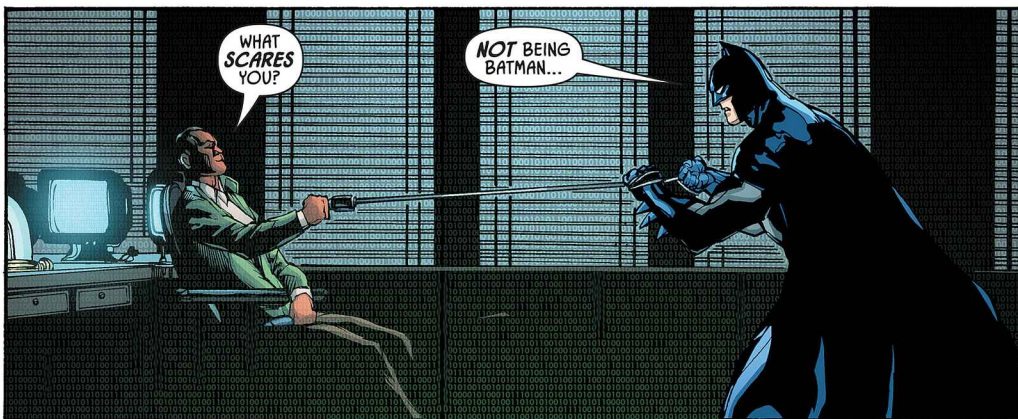
...ANYONE
WHO HAD A **ROLE**--
OR WAS A BUILDING
BLOCK WHEN I WAS
TRYING TO--



**BUILD
A BETTER
BATMAN.**

YES, BRIGHT-EYED, DRIVEN,
FOCUSED, A YOUNG MAN ON
A MISSION, A...CAPED CRUSADER
COMING TO AN **INVENTOR** AND
SCIENTIST WITH SOME IDEAS HE
NEEDED TO SEE REALIZED...





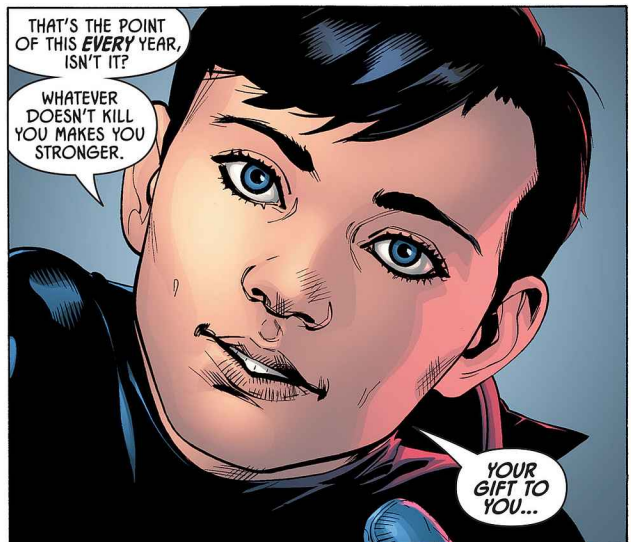
M · Y · T · H · O · L · O · G · Y

HELL AND BACK

...WE'D HAVE
TO WAGE WAR
ON *OURSELVES*,
BRUCE.



STORY AND WORDS **PETER J. TOMASI** • PENCILLER **DOUG MAHNKE**
INKERS **JAIME MENDOZA** AND **MARK IRWIN** • COLORIST **DAVID BARON** • LETTERER **ROB LEIGH**
COVER **MAHNKE, MENDOZA, BARON** • ASST. EDITOR **DAVE WIELGOSZ**
EDITOR **CHRIS CONROY** • GROUP EDITOR **JAMIE S. RICH**





...HAPPY
BIRTHDAY,
BRUCE!



DID *THAT*
JOG YOUR
MEMORY?



DO YOU REMEMBER NOW
THAT *YOU* INITIATED ALL
THIS?

NO...
I DON'T...

SEE, YOU'VE
GOTTEN TOO
GOOD AT PLAYING
EVERY YEAR.



M · Y · T · H · O · L · O · G · Y

THE PRICE YOU PAY

STORY AND WORDS
PETER J. TOMASI

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KEITH CHAMPAGNE,

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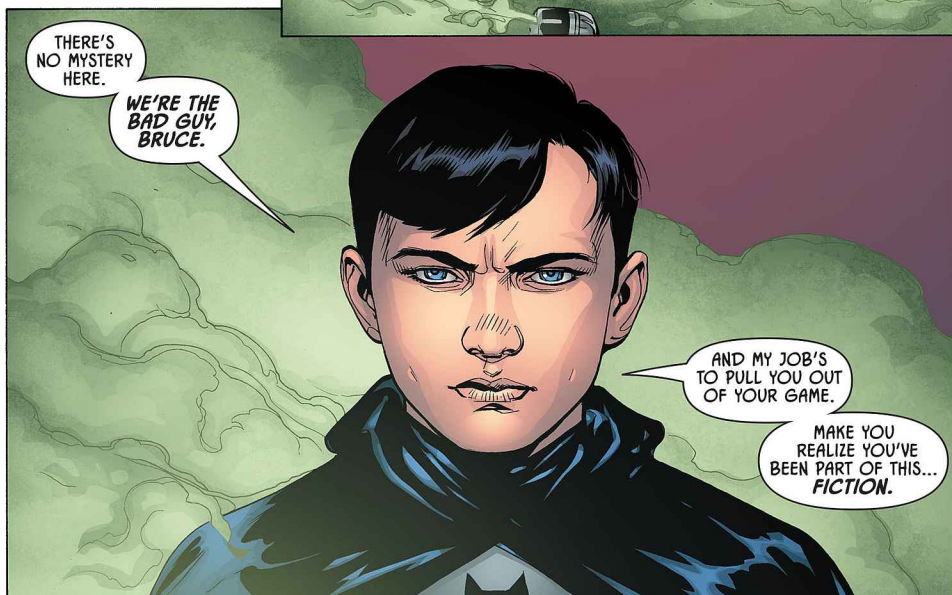


YOU'LL DO NOTHING UNTIL WE CLEAR THIS MYSTERY UP.

POW



MYSTERY?



THERE'S NO MYSTERY HERE.

WE'RE THE BAD GUY, BRUCE.

AND MY JOB'S TO PULL YOU OUT OF YOUR GAME.

MAKE YOU REALIZE YOU'VE BEEN PART OF THIS... FICTION.



HELP YOU SEE THROUGH YOUR OWN STAGECRAFT...

WHAB





WHOEVER OR WHATEVER YOU ARE--I SAID I'M NOT GOING TO HIT YOU AND I MEANT IT.



HOW ARE YOU *GROWING* EXPONENTIALLY WITH EACH PUNCH?



NMF

YOU STILL DON'T GET IT!

SKASH



I'M YOU.

YOU'RE ME.

THIS IS US. AND WE'RE DROWNING.



WHO SENT YOU?!

YOU SENT ME, DAMN IT, AND I'M TRYING TO SAVE YOU!

GIVE US SOME PERSPECTIVE-- ILLUMINATION--

--TO WAKE YOU THE HELL UP!



MY EYES ARE WIDE OPEN!

IS THIS SCARECROW'S DOING?



POOM

NO-- THIS IS YOU FINDING NEW WAYS TO TOP YOURSELF EVERY YEAR!



LEAPING INTO THE ABYSS...



...AND LAUGHING ALL THE WAY DOWN.



WELL, NOW THAT YOU'RE NOT EIGHT YEARS OLD ANYMORE--



WHAM

GNFF

--I'VE DECIDED I CAN HIT YOU AFTER ALL!



WRACK



FRAK



WE LEARNED THE **HARD** WAY THE GOOD OLD DAYS WEREN'T ALL THAT GOOD...



...BUT IN HINDSIGHT, THERE WAS A WEIRD PURITY TO THEM...

...BEFORE WE SURROUNDED OURSELVES WITH ALL THIS... STUFF...



...BEFORE WE DECLARED WAR...

GA FGH



...AND ALMOST DIED IN OUR FIRST YEAR OF BATTLE!

GTH



WE CAN STILL SEE THAT PIMP LUNGING FORWARD FAST...

...THE GLARE OF NEON FLARING OFF THE BLADE IN HIS HAND...



...THE UNMISTAKABLE SOUND OUR BOOT MADE AS IT BROKE HIS CHEEKBONE...

...GROWING OVERCONFIDENT...

...UNTIL THAT YOUNG GIRL SLID HER KNIFE INTO OUR THIGH WITHOUT HESITATION...



CHERRY TOPS GAVE THE GOTHAM STREET A CIRCUS FEEL...

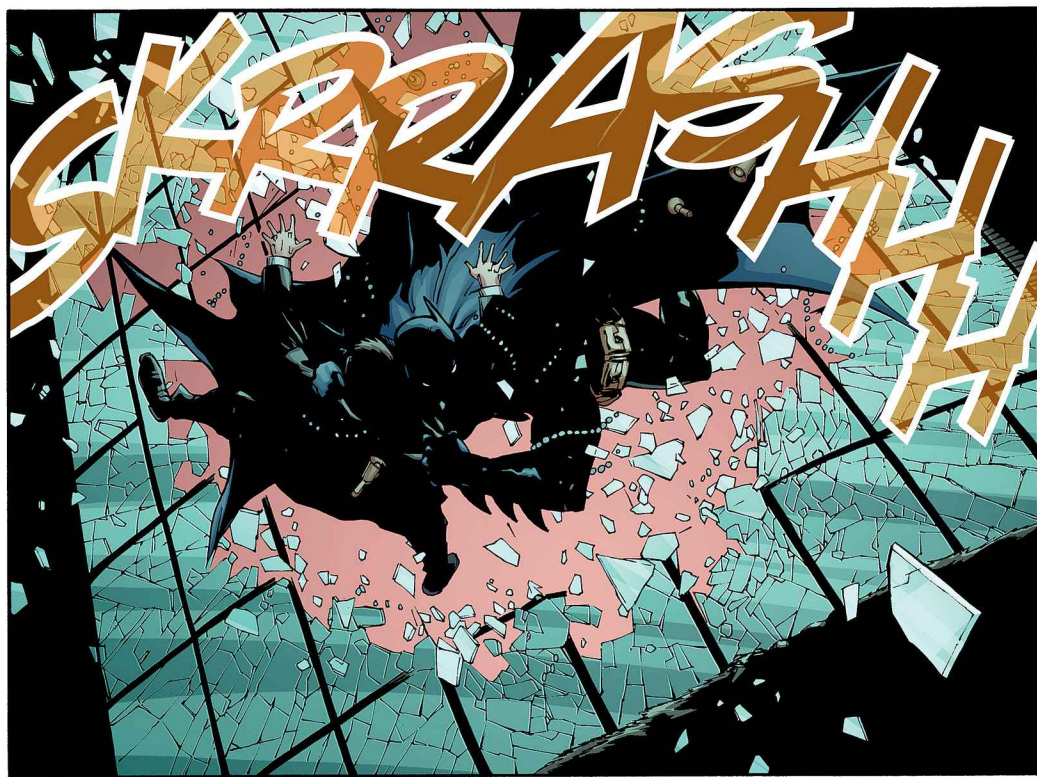
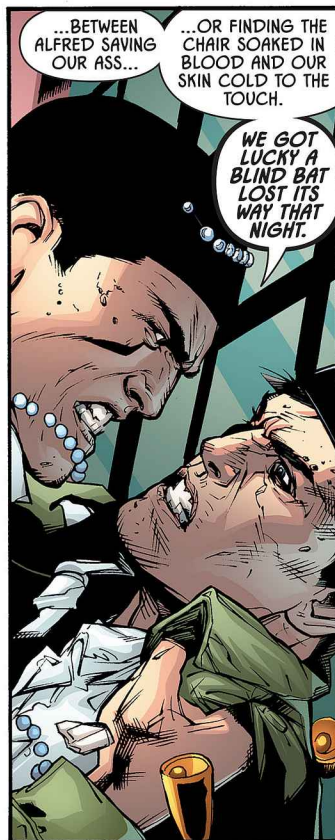
...UNTIL THE KICK OF A .38 SPECIAL SLUG SPUN US AROUND...

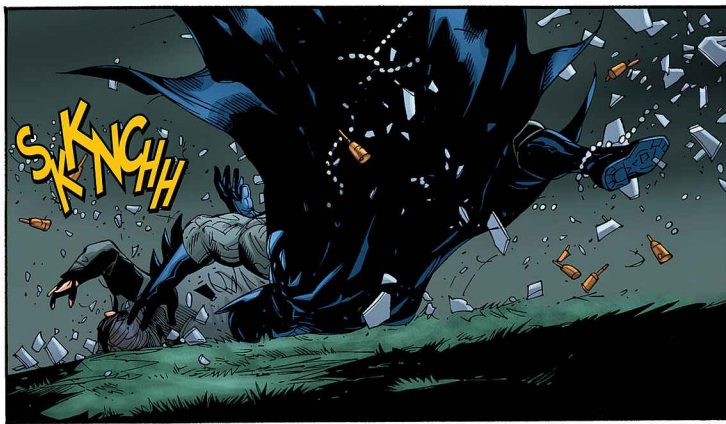
...PERFORATING OUR LUNG...



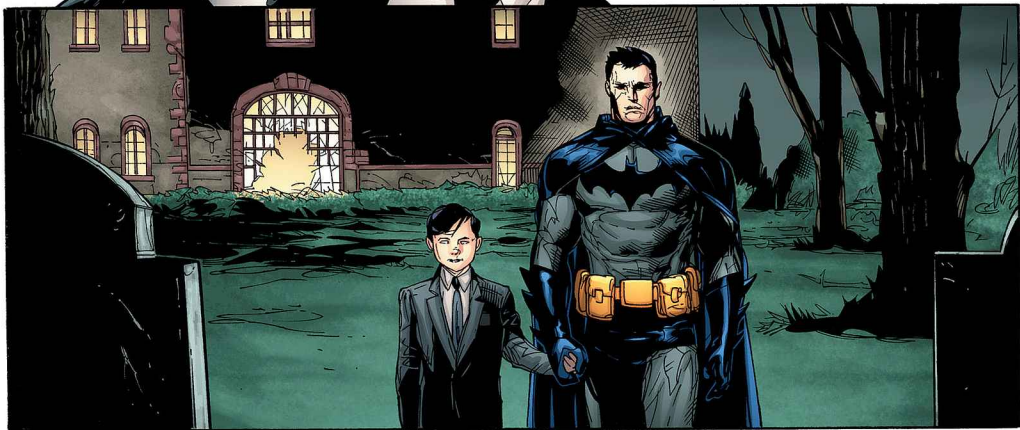
...THE COPPERY TASTE OF BLOOD FILLING OUR MOUTH...

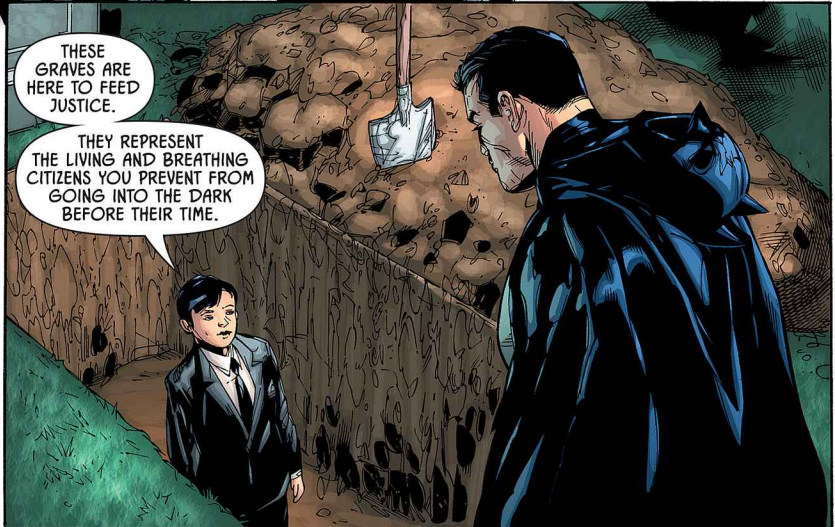
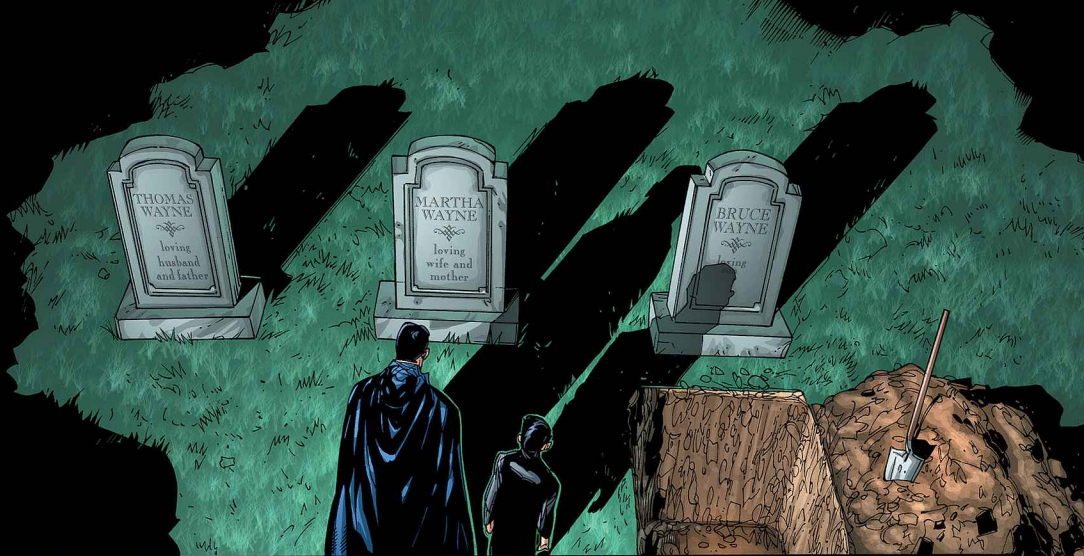
...DREAD THAT THE CRUSADE WAS OVER BEFORE WE COULD BEGIN...



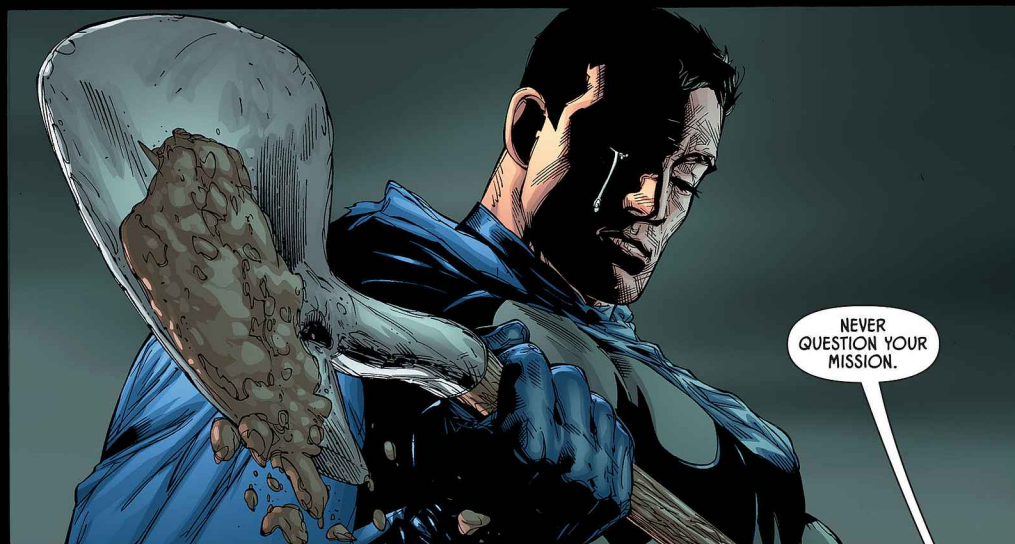


COMING?









GOTHAM
NEEDS
YOU.



GOTHAM
NEEDS ME.



GOTHAM
NEEDS ME.



GOTHAM
NEEDS ME!

CALM
DOWN,
BRUCE...

...THE WATER
IS DRAINING.

I'VE HACKED IN--
THE PROGRAM'S ALREADY
CYCLING DOWN--IT'S
COME TO AN END.



GOTHAM
NEEDS ME!

HOW
LONG'S HE BEEN
IN THAT THING,
ALFRED?



SK
KRRK

GOTHAM
NEEDS ME!

I DON'T
KNOW,
DAMIAN...



...SEEMS HE INITIATED
THIS...STEALTH SEQUENCE
HIMSELF.

SK
KRRK

GOTHAM
NEEDS ME!

STEALTH.
->IT<- YOU MEAN
SECRET, DON'T
YOU?





AND THIS IS SOMETHING YOU'VE BEEN DOING **EVERY YEAR** ON YOUR BIRTHDAY?

THE TESTING APPARATUS **ITSELF** HAS EVOLVED OVER TIME, BUT YES, THIS IS AN ANNUAL... EVENT I'VE KEPT TO MYSELF.

WHY WOULD YOU SUBJECT YOURSELF TO THAT?

EVOLVE OR DIE, BOY.

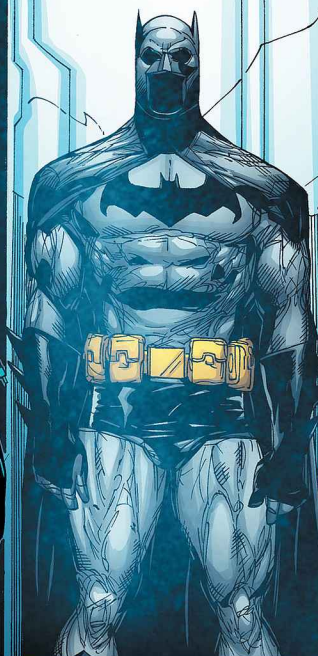
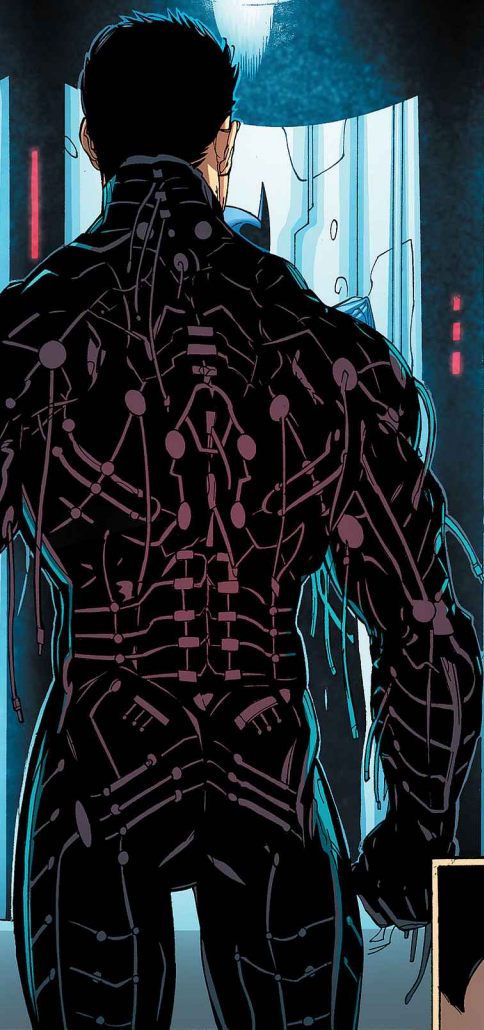
TO **HONOR** THE OATH I TOOK MEANT STRIVING TO BE THE BEST I CAN BE.

EVERY MOMENT.

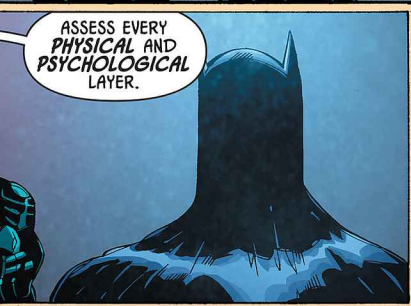
EVERY DAY.

HONING EACH AND EVERY **SKILL SET** I'VE LEARNED TO ITS MAXIMUM EFFICIENCY.

...TO
KILL ME.



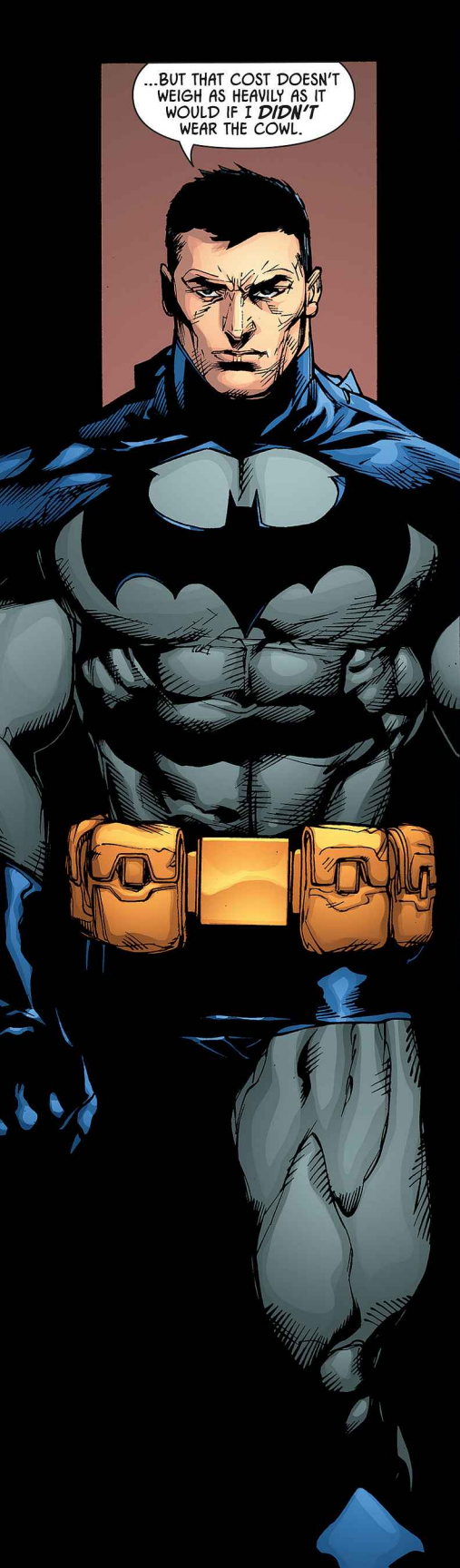
ASSESS EVERY
PHYSICAL AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL
LAYER.



MY FEAR IS THAT, ONE NIGHT
WHEN I NEED TO BE STRONGER,
FASTER, AND SMARTER, I WON'T
BE GOOD ENOUGH.

THERE'S A COST
TO WEARING THE COWL,
JUST AS THERE'S A COST
TO BEING ROBIN, THAT
WE BOTH KNOW ALL
TOO WELL...





...BUT THAT COST DOESN'T WEIGH AS HEAVILY AS IT WOULD IF I *DIDN'T* WEAR THE COWL.



RAISE PLATFORM.

RISING.



SHOW ME.





ONE HUNDRED
AND EIGHTY-TWO
GOTHAM CITIZENS
MURDERED THIS
YEAR.



LAST YEAR IT WAS TWO HUNDRED
AND FOURTEEN, FATHER.

TWO HUNDRED
AND THIRTY-ONE LIVES THE YEAR
BEFORE *THAT*, BRUCE.

I'D LIKE TO POINT OUT THE
NUMBER OF MURDERED INNOCENT SOULS
HAS BEEN **DROPPING** SINCE THE NIGHT YOU
RANG THE BELL AND PUT ON THE COWL.

ONE YEAR,
SOON, IT WILL
BE ZERO.

ABSOLUTE
ZERO.



KNOCK KNOCK

HEARD A CRAZY RUMOR PEOPLE TEND TO EAT DINNER AFTER DARK SOMETIMES IN PLACES CALLED **RESTAURANTS**.

YES, I HEARD THAT SOMEWHERE, TOO, ACTUALLY.

HOW ABOUT YOU LET THE INBOX FEND FOR ITSELF THE REST OF THE EVENING?

ARE YOU DOING THE SAME?

WELL, I CAN'T PROMISE THAT IN THE WEE HOURS OF THE MORNING--LONG AFTER I'VE DROPPED YOU OFF--MY ATTENTION WILL NOT BE DIRECTED ELSEWHERE, BUT...

HONEST TO A FAULT.

SO, WHAT'S ALL THIS THEN?

BEEN A **WHILE** SINCE I TOLD YOU HOW MUCH YOU **MEAN** TO THIS CITY...TO ALFRED...TO ME...

...I THINK TONIGHT'S AS GOOD A NIGHT AS ANY TO DRINK A TOAST TO **OLD FRIENDS** WHO DON'T GET TOGETHER NEARLY AS OFTEN AS THEY SHOULD.

I COMPLETELY AGREE.

LEAD ON, BRUCE.





AN OLD ENEMY RETURNS, AND A STRANGE NEW MYSTERY BEGINS!

A mysterious enemy who knows everything about Batman's history is pulling no punches. Clues take the form of disturbing reminders of the Dark Knight's darkest days, as he is forced to fight a losing battle to protect those who have been most important to his transformation from a scared little boy to Gotham's champion.

When interrogating his foes inside Arkham Asylum raises more questions than answers, Batman must depend on himself alone to discover the mastermind behind these challenges...a foe who has been part of Batman's life since the very beginning of his crime-fighting career!

The acclaimed **SUPERMAN** writer/artist team of **PETER J. TOMASI** (**ADVENTURES OF THE SUPER SONS**) and **DOUG MAHNKE** (**JUSTICE LEAGUE**) pit Batman against a figure from his past who knows all the Dark Knight's secrets! This opening volume collects **DETECTIVE COMICS** #994-999.



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